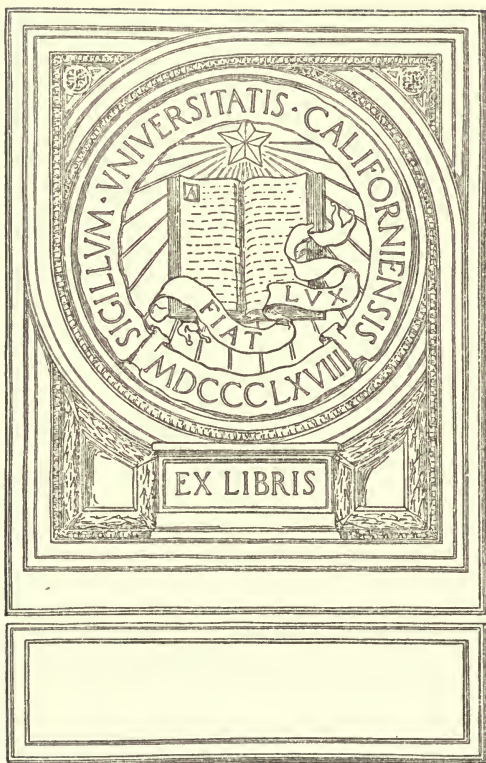


WALLED IN



ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS



D. M. B.

1907.

From

F. R. B. Wife.



[See p. 155]

"OH, YOU ARE ALWAYS IN TROUBLE," SAID TESSA, LIGHTLY

Walled In

A Novel

By

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps) Ward

AUTHOR OF
"GATES AJAR" ETC.

Illustrated by
Clarence F. Underwood



New York and London
Harper & Brothers Publishers

1907

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Published October, 1907.

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I



THE professor gently laid down the manuscript of his third lecture on style, and capped the shield upon his fountain-pen. Although the lecture was unfinished, and he was amid-stream of the creative current, he remembered that his sister was to be taken to the four-o'clock train. It had never been the habit of the household to excuse him from any of the practical aspects of life which a hard-worked man of intellect and some imagination may be spared, if there is any one to spare him. If he had the instincts of a dreamer he seldom knew their gratification.

Lost, strayed, or stolen domestic responsibilities which did or did not belong to anybody in particular were traced to him as a matter of course. He never disowned them; it would have done no good if he had. It might be anything—a catch in the plumbing, or a deficiency of floss silk. Was the child sick? Had the cook given notice? Was the

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caterer late? Had a trustee been coldly received by a new parlor maid? The call of every care clamored at the study. In this instance, as his wife had not hesitated to remind him, the interruption was legitimate. Jane was his sister, and somebody must take Jane to the train.

While he stood trying to clamp the sheets of the lecture with the tenderness of a man for his manuscript, the study door burst boisterously inward, and a whirl of wind took the pages all over the room. His little boy blew in on the gust.

"Hurry up there, Papa! Mommer says to tell you—"

The boy proceeded to relate what Mommer said to tell. It was to be noticed that while he used the babyish "Mommer," he manfully said "Papa."

The child's shrill voice had a peremptory note, set to a key that is apt to be inherited. The professor listened absently; he was on his hands and knees picking up pages. His sister came in and helped him.

"There's plenty of time," she said, soothingly. "Young Sheffield has got the steam on. Don't hurry so, Myrton. It tires you."

Miss Ferris was a meagre woman, and long—almost as tall as her brother; she stooped with difficulty in her stiff gray travelling dress. She removed her gloves, and put the pages of the manuscript together with methodical, New England fingers; she had always done things to make Myrton comfortable; her mother had brought her up that

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way. The professor felt more thankful than he used to feel to Jane; nobody spoiled him now. He glanced at her neat blond hair and mild middle-aged mouth gratefully.

"Tessa had to go out," observed Miss Ferris, without looking at her brother.

"Isn't she here to say good-bye to you?" demanded the professor in a controlled voice.

"She's gone to the scampus," the child announced. "Some boys sent Harry Sheffield after her. It's a ball game. She said she couldn't be kept waiting round. Philo's gone with her. Can't I go in the Tommybabel? Say, Papa, I want to go! I want to go too-oo—oo."

When Jane Ferris said, "Be quiet, Trip!" she took the tone with which one used to speak to children in Vermont when she was young. But the method of address was an anachronism to Trip, who stamped the third lecture on style with his little foot. The boy shrilled on more authoritatively than petulantly.

"Why does he not help you pick up the manuscript?" asked Miss Ferris in a low voice. The professor turned his brilliant eyes perplexedly upon her. It never occurred to the father of the period to ask his son to pick up anything.

"Oh, I'll pick 'em up," suggested Trip, with a condescending bob of yellow curls, "if I can go in the Tommybabel."

Trip was a little fellow, still in his blue Russian blouse; but his language had something of the dig-

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nity natural to the household of the professor of rhetoric and English literature. When Trip said "scampus," or "Tommybabel," the solecism awoke a finer smile than it would have done had the case been that of the plumber's child or the caterer's.

"Harry Sheffield builded the fire," persisted Trip. "I arxed him to. I wanted to see the Tommybabel sputter up. I wanted to go too—oo—oo."

His father, perceptibly hesitating, looked at the child with luminous, parental eyes.

"Who will hold him on the way back?" asked the old maid, dispassionately.

"You are not at all timid about this sort of thing, are you, Jane?"

The professor put the question politely as he handed his sister into the steam-carriage. He had brought the machine to the side of the house. It was rather a large house, of the style built for professors in New England seventy-five or a hundred years ago; it was painted white, with green blinds; it had a thoughtful, flat roof, with a discreet railing, and two ells, or wings, which, to the irreverent imagination, seemed to be about to flap and fly. In one of these (as the chair had done since the creation of the department) the professor had his study.

The autumn cosmos was planted under the study window; it stood seven feet tall, and blossomed riotously that year. Stars of crimson, lake, and

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white burned above Ferris's head as he brushed by; he broke one and put it in his coat; he was full of boyish, joyous impulses, and cared for flowers. He was apt to put them in his buttonhole himself. Tessa did not think of it.

"I am not afraid to go anywhere with *you*, brother," replied Miss Ferris.

This answer pleased Myrton Ferris; it indicated, he felt, the attitude becoming to women. Smiling, he started the carriage, carefully respecting the speed limit, as a professor must, but increasing it as he could; he whirled exultantly through the village, face to the hills, hand on throttle, foot on brake, fire in his eye, and youth in his heart. His shoulders showed their fine shape through his rubber touring-coat; he "sat tall," as the students put it. Harry Sheffield (who came from the coast) took bicycle trips with him sometimes, and said, "Ferry sits like a main-mast."

We are not recording the biography of a genius, hardly that of a great man (though this may depend upon the definition), but in one respect Myrton Ferris had that happy union of opposite qualities which goes so far to make the extraordinary character—he was an athletic scholar. Already recognized—and he was but forty-three—as standing well to the front of his department, he golfed, he climbed, he fenced, he sailed, he handled a good fresh-water oar, he swam like a fish. When he was a lad (although an honor man) he was on the college team. This circumstance, and the tradi-

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tions adhering to it, gave him popularity among the students. He was the favorite professor.

As he rode down the main street of the town he met the president of the college, who signalled a wish to speak with him. Ferris brought the rocking carriage to an artistic stop.

"We have changed the hour of the faculty meeting to half-past seven," said the president. "That matter of the electives comes up. You will be sure and be there? A good deal depends on you."

"Oh, I'll be on hand," assented Ferris, heartily. "Count upon me."

"That is a habit I have acquired," replied the president, smiling. He lifted his hat to Miss Ferris, who glanced after him with timid admiration.

The president of Routledge would have been a distinguished figure anywhere, and was pre-eminent in the studious, secluded college circle. He was a man of the world, and familiar to it. Incidentally he was a widower, but Jane Ferris looked at him without thinking of that; she had the old-fashioned, virginal heart; her brother occupied it, as he had done ever since he was born.

Jane Ferris held hard to the rail of the automobile as the carriage blew past the campus and the golf-links.

"There's a tournament to-morrow," said Myrton, happily.

"You're champion, aren't you?" she panted. Her lips were purple, her hands were cold. She was in terror of her life; but neither gasolene,

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kerosene, nor electricity could have torn from her the confession of the fact. She had always believed that the world spun for Myrton's sake; and if this composite of hurricane and hell fire could make him happy, she would have perished in the explosion which she momentarily anticipated without a quaver of cowardice or reproach. Jane was almost reconciled to his marriage when she perceived his boyish delight in the automobile—a luxury which only a “professor with property” could command. Whatever else was to be said of Tessa, she had been handsome about her money.

“You will take my good-bye to her?” Miss Ferris repeated for the third time as Myrton lifted her out at the station.

“Why, you're trembling!” exclaimed the professor.

In fact, poor Jane could hardly stand; every nerve and muscle shook with solid fright. She did not look at the steam-carriage as she jumped out, but turned her back on its baleful figure. She wished that she might never see it again. The smoke of its torment went up in her biblically trained imagination; nor, to this hour, has it gone down.

The train was already screaming down the valley, and Myrton hurried away to check her trunk. He got aboard with her, and had to run for it to leap off. He left her quivering with the little apprehensions which women cannot control, and men

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neither understand nor respect. She looked from the car window as long as she could see him. He stood bareheaded and smiling, cap in hand; his touring-coat was open, and showed his strong throat tanned from the summer's outings; the cosmos (it was a white one) gleamed like an order upon his heart; his merry eyes burned blue fire; she could not see the lines on his forehead at that distance, or her glasses were dim. Myrton looked the eidolon of vigor, both of the body and the mind, and happier than he was.

Ferris, in the steam-carriage, rode out into the country; he had the ease of heart known only to men who live by their brains when the strain is temporarily loosened. No boy cutting recitation for a frolic was happier than the professor out-of-doors. He worshipped "the god of the open air," and never had in term-time half a chance to cultivate this religion. He took his outings seriously, one might almost say sacramentally. Days imprisoned in the vitiated atmosphere of lecture-rooms, and nights worn gray with anxious and ambitious study, drew their unappeasable revenge out of an hour like this. He was an enthusiastic master of his machine, and handled it affectionately. He coveted the consciousness of freedom, the sense of wings, the thrill of flight; this is a sensation which no other form of sport gives in equal intensity to its devotee. Ferris idealized it, perhaps, but loved it the more for that. He knew for the

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first time in his athletic life how birds feel, and dreamed that he understood their psychology.

The month was October; it has been known in the region from that day to this as "the grand October." There had been no rain for many weeks, and a sun-drenched world had fought the frosts back; so we see pain vanquished by sheer force of joy. Routledge, like most of our country college towns, was held in the palm of a hill country, and all the horizons were high.

Heavily wooded and untraversed, these had flung out an early and a matchless coloring; the oldest eyes in the village did not and the most observant could not remember such an oriflamme. The atmosphere was saturated with resplendence; one seemed rather to breathe color than air; violet haze exhaled from valleys still palpitating green, and smoke trailed from bonfires of leaves—spirals and spires of that exquisite, that evanishing blue which looks more like a soul than anything nature offers us, unless it be a "rose-cloud dimly seen above." Miles within miles the forest withdrew itself and gathered depth of feeling. Oak and chestnut, ash and maple, pine and birch and poplar, took on a splendid reserve like stanzas compact of smouldering words which set ablaze the scorn of death, the determination of life. It was one of the days that lift the heart of the happy and deceive the consciousness of the sad. It was one of the hours when it seemed incredible (the

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professor thought) that man has not the right to live forever in this world, and doubtful if there exist another as attractive.

He rode in a kind of pagan ecstasy, and he rode a good while. As he whirled along in the now deepening and dulling afternoon, he sang a catch from an old English song that he used in the class-room as an illustration of the adequate opening which declines to an inadequate close. He had forgotten, as was rather natural to him, the weaker, and remembered the stronger lines;

“Golden and glorious,
Autumn victorious!
Fling all your banners into the sun!”

He threw back his fine head and repeated the refrain joyously; his athletic figure rose from his carriage like that of a Greek charioteer on a panel; he was carved out of one piece with his wheels. The uncouth costume—the touring-coat, the cap, the visor, the mask—seemed only to modernize an ancient scene, as to-day modernizes, but does not escape, the emotion of yesterday.

The roads were quite deserted, for he had taken the longest way around through the farming region, and he let the machine out a little. The abrupt twilight of the hill country had now come on. Suddenly he perceived that it was almost dark. He stopped the carriage and lighted the acetylene lamps; they blazed into his happy face and seemed to scrutinize it; he swung in, opened the throttle

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again, and whirled on. He was an expert driver, destitute of fear, intelligently, even intellectually cautious. With a little laugh he recalled the expression of his sister's face at the station. What was it like to find one's self a being of that sort—helpless, pitiable, the prey of petty apprehension, mentally, because physically unfit? In the now heavily pressing darkness his voice rang out,

“Golden and glorious,
Autumn victorious!—”

His strong fingers gripped the handle-bar and grew to it as though it were one of his own muscles. The chug! of the exhaust seemed to adopt the rhythm of his heart. Shadow cut from shadow, his powerful form dominated the dark into which he was leaping. He was the mythology of steam and motion—the centaur of our day. Intellect and muscle, will and machinery, man and fire, were one.

He had some such thoughts as these as he swung into the village, but they quickly dispersed in the strain upon his skill and attention necessitated by the exchange of mountain roads for college streets.

He checked his speed cautiously, although the carriage was still driving at a comfortable pace. The lights of the town looked more numerous than usual, and brighter; they pulsed, and seemed to swing towards him like signals; possibly they confused him a little—the roads that he had travelled had been so dark. He spun past the golf-links

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with boyish anticipation of to-morrow's tournament, and climbed the long hill from whose top he should make a swift run home. The large white columns of the president's mansion came gleaming in sight. The campus, from which the last groups were blending away, slid by in shadow. By a turn of the head he could see the shining windows of his own house. He wondered if his wife had got back; Tessa was an uncertain little figure in the domestic foreground. At the foot of the hill lurked the bridge which he had been keeping in mind. It was a narrow bridge, and had been out of order; it spanned a small creek, or large brook, a tributary of the distant river; he remembered to have heard a workman say as he rode by with Jane that the repairs would be finished by night. Nevertheless, with his natural thoroughness he shot a keen look out from under his visor as he began to descend the hill. The lights in the college janitor's house at the foot of the descent seemed lower than usual, or a little huddled.

The professor came down at a prudent pace; this accelerated as he approached the level.

The road had roughened considerably, and the machine began to jar; it struck some unexpected obstruction, and his foot slipped from the brake. The carriage took a sudden leap ahead and swerved violently.

The acetylene eyes of the machine appeared to have seen danger, and the automobile shied.

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Simultaneously with the shock there came to the professor's consciousness the knowledge that the repairs on the bridge were not completed, and that he had mistaken for the janitor's kitchen or stable lights the danger signals of the broken and half-obstructed road.

He felt rather than saw the swaying and shivering of lanterns, and thought rather than heard the crackling of broken glass. The carriage uttered a sound not unlike a groan. It smote a heap of gravel and stone, reared, leaped, and ran like a frightened horse.

The first thing of which Ferris was conscious as he went hurling out was a sense of mortification—the keen mortification of an athlete who has been beaten by the materials of his own game.

“Any Freshman on his trial trip might have done as stupid a thing!” He struck out mightily to prevent the worst—but granite and gravel received him in a crash of stinging pain.

“The railing of the bridge is left,” he thought. His arms groped and gripped for it, and clasped the air. As he fell, with the instinct of the intellectual man who is accustomed to relate cause and effect as naturally as he inhales or exhales breath, he accurately explained to himself his situation:

“The carriage broke the railing of the bridge when it threw me out. I am going over, and it is all up with me.”

He did not cry out, but plunged grimly and silently.

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The automobile ran on. Masterless and maddened, it presented at first a desperate appearance, like that of a runaway horse. All the lawless attitudes of which it was capable took their turn within its throbbing frame. It trembled, it leaped, it rocked, it shivered, it suffered spasms, and as we said, it shied. The beating of its heart could be heard like that of some powerful creature too sensitive to be a monster, but too savage to be tamed. It seemed to have received from the accident as severe a shock as the man, and to be equally conscious of danger.

It so happened by a great fortune that the street was clear at that point, and the machine had its mania to itself. It collided with nothing and nobody, and, in fact, no person had noticed the runaway. It bounded on for a few minutes, entirely unthwarted, assuming an awful license, with which no being of the species that we call intelligent interfered.

It is known that metals suffer fatigue, that their tissues undergo waste and repair; that they require rest, and are reinvigorated by it; that they experience decay and death. Who shall say that they never think? Or that they cannot feel?

The automobile gradually began to exhibit a curious vacillation; its acetylene pupils seemed to dilate with perplexity; it wavered, and showed a tendency to slow down; it shook, as if with some inexplicable indecision. It seemed like a sentient thing, whose rage was cooling into regret. It

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backed off the road as the motor-carriage must to turn in narrow places, and so moved completely around. Now, heading in the direction whence it had come, and rapidly covering the ground that it had traversed as a runaway, the automobile began to retrace its course. An onlooker, had there been any, might have said that the rebel returned as a penitent.

Nothing is so incredible as truth, and no writer of fiction would venture to invent the circumstance that we have to relate. It is a simple transcription of fact that the machine, driven, who shall say by what—cohesion of atoms? or force of remorse?—went back as it had come, returned to the bridge, hurled itself upon the heap of gravel and stone, now dark in the ruins of the shattered and extinguished lanterns, and panting, exhausted, quivering in every iron bone and wooden sinew, came to a stop at the spot where it had betrayed and dashed the man.

There, its heart of fire broke, and flashing, flared and blazed. The detonation followed instantly.

II



HE report of the blazing carriage was heard for a considerable distance, and aroused attention, idle or curious, concerned or indifferent, according to the temperament of the listener. The first, because the finest anxiety to respond to the explosion, was that of a dog.

When the ball game was over, and the boys came pouring pell-mell home, one group lingered and returned leisurely from the campus. Three or four students, members of the team, escorted a lady—a little lady, who might have reached on tiptoe to their massive shoulders. They were eagerly discussing the game with her; she knew the jargon of the play as well as they did, and her staccato laugh punctuated a torrent of talk about “pitcher,” “catcher,” “short-stop,” and “centre field,” which crowded the merry air. One of the group did not laugh, but guarded the lady soberly. This was a cocker-spaniel, who, failing to share the enthusiasm of Routledge for baseball—an enthusiasm widely experienced and warmly cultivated by both the college and the town—had followed the mistress of his household dutifully to

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the campus, where he had spent a dreary afternoon dodging the endearments of strange ladies, or the indignities of familiar boys, and cherishing a profound personal scepticism as to the value or interest of the national game.

The spaniel was a thoroughbred, weighing about twenty pounds; he was black, with the white markings that have gone out of fashion—the gleam in the forehead, the ruffle at the throat and breast, which, to the taste of those who prefer what is called “a light animal,” add so much to the attractions of the cocker. The dog was unfashionable in another respect—his tail had not been cut, and its curling plume had the unmutilated beauty given by nature to the breed. The long, black feather began to swish slowly as the spaniel, pleased at the prospect of home and supper, shadowed the wife of his master. It would not be easy to explain how the dog gave the impression that he classified the lady in this manner, having, in fact, failed to accept her as the mistress of his heart's allegiance.

When the group of students began to lounge away, swinging towards the dormitory halls, leaving the lady with a single escort, the dog's tail ceased to stir; he assumed a dejected air, and his ears went down critically. Suddenly they leaped, every hair on his body stiffened, he wheeled and planted his feet; his head turned listening far on one side, as if the vibrations of the darkness conveyed to him in advance the intelligence of the

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distant and mysterious shock which now shook the cool autumn air as the spaniel (observing with racial unconcern) had watched a terrier shake a rat.

"What a horrid noise!" complained the lady; she started girlishly. "Anybody being hazed?" She shrank towards the student, who offered his arm protectingly to his professor's wife.

"Don't be alarmed. I'll take care of you. It must be blasting somewhere."

"It hasn't hit the dog, has it?" observed Mrs. Ferris, trembling against the young man's shoulder. "Where is Philos?"

But Philos was not to be seen. Before the reverberation had ceased to echo the spaniel had vanished in the dark. The student and the professor's wife whistled and called conscientiously for a few minutes, and then walked slowly on.

"Oh, he'll be all right," she said, with the indifference of a woman who tolerates but does not love her husband's dog.

Now, a dog lives in a chronic condition of exquisite anxiety for those he loves, which no man and few women (if any) can understand; and Philos was one of the sensitives of his race.

The spaniel had plunged through the dimly lighted street with head held muzzle up; he sniffed the trembling air, and ran incoherently for a while; then his nose went down, and he began to scent his way through the mysterious spaces into which masters disappear, and out of which they may or may not come again.

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Evidence that is too fine for human senses serves these little love-detectives, nor does it often betray them: it may be a trail of gasoline, differing—who shall say how?—from other gasoline—the indefinable trace of the adored in the oily waste that had fallen from the locker, the mysterious penumbra of the master in the very air through which his empty carriage had whirled—and now, tossed into a tangle of shrubbery, out of sight and scent of mere human beings, a glove!—a stiff, rubber gauntlet, precious and familiar.

It is the spaniel nature to lie upon the master's clothes, and Philos, for one wasted moment, obeyed his nature. With a whine of delight he threw himself upon the gauntlet, caressing it with pretty motions of the head and paws, as if the object of his search had been attained, and there were an end of it. But he quickly dropped the glove and, seized with uncontrollable apprehensions, leaped away.

For a while after his plunge from the broken bridge into the bed of the shallow stream Myrton Ferris retained his consciousness, which was, in a way, the worst of it. He perceived at once that he must be badly hurt. In the spot that he had struck there were more rocks than water, and that he had gone crashing upon some cruel specimens of these was clear. His mind struggled for its mastery of a bruised and broken body. He tried to call, but whether his voice refused him, or

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whether there were no person within hearing of it, he could not decide. It occurred to him that few people passed over the bridge after dark, and that, in its present condition of disrepair, in fact, no one might cross it again that night. He thought of the janitor, but the house seemed unaccountably a great way off; the lights in the cottage windows wavered or went out or were not—the injured man could not say which—before his straining eyes. He made several distinct efforts to call the janitor by name:

“Taker! Carl Taker? Oh, Taker!”

But these proved ineffectual, and it began to seem to Ferris somehow not quite worth while to repeat them. It struck him that when one had so little strength to give, perhaps so little time to live, the margin of either might be better employed than in yelling to Taker. By the time that he had reached this conclusion, the explosion took place.

To the helpless man this brought a spasm of acute and extraordinary consciousness. The unexpectedness of the shock; its rebellious force; the long reverberations which the hills repeated; the infuriated hissing of the steam; the ironical escape of the gasolene; the flare, the scorch, and then the flame—forced his imagination into hybrid activity, at one moment as delirious as it was sane the next.

The first thought of the wounded professor was: “I am more hurt than I supposed. I am going to die—and this concussion that I hear and feel is my form of death. Probably it varies with differ-

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ent people even in the same circumstances." Then: "Why, no! The gasoline-tank has exploded. The automobile is on fire. . . . I shall lose my machine," he added, regretfully. For a moment it seemed important that he should lose his machine. Then, immediately nothing seemed important. He lay looking up at the pageant of fire upon the bridge with a gratified sense of its spectacular effect. He did not even wonder that it was so long in attracting attention; it seemed natural that he and the machine should meet dissolution together and alone; he had been very fond of the machine—more so than of anything in his athletic life. Then he began to remember, but rather slowly, that there were other things of which he was more fond.

Now, with a blinding vividness—like that of the fire that flared above him, expressing the features of his white face upon their background of rocks and water—he was smitten with visions of his child. He did not think about his wife, at first—only of the boy.

Trip, in his Russian blouse, stood with his lordly air, watching while the manuscript of the third lecture on style was picked up laboriously from the study floor. Trip, with his under lip put up, kneaded wet, big eyes with grimy little knuckles, pathetically begging a ride in the Tommybabel. Trip was a symmetroscope. Put any trifle under the lens through which you viewed the child, and the consequence would be incalculable. Now,

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Trip, flashing from tears to temper, stamped his tiny foot and imperiously demanded that he should go too-oo-oo. Suppose the boy had gone, too?

Jane Ferris, in her gray travelling-suit, stood by the piazza, under the tall cosmos. She was about to make a difficult ascent of the automobile. Her boots were cloth, with elastic on the sides. There was a pucker in her forehead. She had her old-maidish look. She said, "Who will hold him on the way back?"

The professor's heart tightened in his anguished body. For the first time since the maniac carriage had hurled him into the claws of death, he was conscious of some species of religious emotion, and his bruised lips muttered a half-audible "Thank God!"

If Jane never did another thing of any consequence as long as she lived; if she passed out of sight and memory as a significant but unobserved figure in a play crosses the stage in the first scene, and appears on it no more—Jane had lived to a purpose so definite and so important that—who knew?—she might have been created to that end; nor would she in the least have resented the implication of the father's heart; she was that kind of woman; she would have lived, or died, or never lived at all, had the choice been given her, for Myrton's sake. And Jane had saved his boy.

With that Ferris thought no more about Jane. She ceased from his mind like a sentence he had read, when his attention was swung on by the next

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and more absorbing one. There was the boy—and still the boy! The little fellow ran along under the cosmos; it towered above his head like a grove; he tossed his curls with a certain scornful way of his; he got it from his mother; he would grow to be like his mother; he would grow up—how? Poor little lad! No man to look after him, a big fellow at college, reeling home nights—unfathered, uncontrolled. . . . Would it have been better for the little chap if he *had* gone, too, in the Tommybabel? A cry that the pangs of his crushed body had not wrung from him parted the pale lips of the father:

“She never can manage Trip without me. It is not in her.”

Stimulated by this worse than his physical anguish he tried to call and call again for help, struggling up on one elbow, and staring at the still deserted bridge; it had caught now, from the machine, and it was blazing beneath and behind the ruined carriage. Above, he could see the sky—a cloudy sky stabbed by a few sharp stars. The effort overcame him; he sank back, plashing in the shallow water. He thought that he heard distant feet or voices. But this was now an unimportant circumstance. He felt as shipwrecked men do in freezing seas, who drown because it does not seem worth while to hold on.

He was recalled to consciousness by a kiss. Life stirred at his side; a tender, curling creature clung there. Something lapped him behind the ear, and he perceived that it was something which had done

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the same before. The act had a certain familiarity that struck him forcibly and enabled him to battle with his benumbed brain. He turned his face feebly, and it rested upon the warm body of a panting dog.

"Philos!" he said. "Why, Philos!"

The dog, who had been crying for joy, uttering little yelps and yaps between kisses, now began to whine distressfully, and to paw at the helpless thing which, having been, was always master. Philos was doing his best to get the man to his feet.

"You thought of me, old fellow—didn't you?" muttered the professor. "Out of a whole townful—it took *you* to do it."

He lapsed away when he had said so much as this, nor did he try to say or to do anything more. He felt, in fact, that Philos would take care of him; the dog was capable of it. Why concern himself?

The town was now alive and pulsating to the spot. The janitor, being of the race that, having eyes, see not, had some time since discovered the automobile, but not the man; he had rung in the fire alarm, and was laboriously occupied in trying to save the machine. The department came clanging down the street, and the college thundered behind it. Before one could turn on the heel, scores of students packed the burning bridge, and before one could say, How many! they were hundreds. The president was reported as somewhere on the

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way, and several of the faculty, sprinting like boys, came panting up into the shouting crowd. The fireman did not shout; they worked in the half-supercilious silence with which they were accustomed to treat an unimportant alarm. Supposing themselves to have been called to a brush fire—the seventh that day, the twenty-seventh that autumn week—they had responded rather sulkily in the motor, with the broom brigade and the hose; but fire in a college town is never to be lightly dealt with; the chemical had been added for precaution's sake, and there was now force enough to put out a chapel or a dormitory. The hubbub was considerable; the bridge and the street were thronged; the boys were singing; some one started the college yell:

“Routledge!
Routledge!
Hi-ho-rah!”

In the centre of the merry *mêlée* the automobile burned sullenly, hissing at the firemen. Its throbbing colors went from chrome to orange, to red, to steam-gray, to lamp-black; it stood dripping with cold sweat, like that of a sentient being at the last hour, and met its end with a certain dignity which belongs to complicated machinery.

The carriage was quite a wreck, and in the confusion had, in fact, been recognized by no one. A few of the older men had indeed peered about for the owner of the machine, and one or two of the

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faculty had tried to follow the tracks of the heavily rubbered wheels, but these were confused—the carriage stood headed out of town—and the belief that the owner had abandoned it and gone back for help was generally accepted. The break in the railing of the bridge, if noticed at all, was taken to be a feature of the repairs; the accident was viewed as a lark, and treated accordingly. The students had not had so much fun that term. Pushing, singing, hurrying, howling, jostling—ready to fan the ancient and instinctive antagonism between gown and town from any spark—they were on a fair way to a very pretty battle with the firemen, when one of the boys, in the middle of the college yell, stopped short and said, “My God!”

The fellows who were nearest to him saw that he was stooping over some small object on the wet and blackened bridge; they gathered to see what it was, and took the cigars from their mouths to look.

A little dog was on the bridge—a cocker-spaniel, drenched and shivering; across the white shirt-frill on his breast a red stain ran; there was another on his forehead; the dog’s eyes were wild with terror and liquid with personal love; they burned from his face with the scorching look that animals have in catastrophes; the spaniel had only the sign language by which to reach that towering, barking mass of almighty men; he chose the most poignant symbol in his vocabulary; he selected a student whom he knew, and sat up and begged at the young man’s feet.

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The boy was Sheffield's chum (Brander by name), and had been entertained at the square white house with the wings, where Sheffield was a frequent guest. Brander was a short, near-sighted boy, with round spectacles. He bent over the spaniel and examined the trembling creature carefully. With an oath he pushed aside a fireman who was trampling on the little thing, and forced back a mass of students who were bearing down upon it with the thoughtlessness of an avalanche.

"Stand back! Back there, I say! You'll crush it to chips. It's a dog—boys, *it's Ferry's dog!*"

The college yell choked half-way in the throats of a hundred lads; the college songs ceased from the lips of three hundred more, and floated echoing in midair.

One of the team (it was the catcher) sprang forward and knelt on the wet, burned bridge beside the spaniel; he put out a big hand, toughened by half a dozen virile seasons on the field, and tenderly stroked the cocker. Taker, the janitor, stepped forward and swung a lantern. The boy drew his hand back and examined it by the swaying light. As he held his finger up a red drop dripped from it.

"And yet," he said, in a low voice, "the dog doesn't seem to be hurt."

"Boys!" cried the short fellow with the round glasses. He took the heavy little creature and lifted it as high as he could. "This is Ferry's dog. That must be Ferry's machine. . . . *Where is the professor?*"

Walled In

"Ask the dog," suggested the catcher.

"Philos," said one of the boys in a serious tone "where is your master?"

The short fellow put the dog down and repeated the question kindly.

"Come, Philos, tell us where your master is!"

The spaniel uttered a scream of hysterical joy. His beautiful feathery tail began to wag against the knees of the lad who held him. Barking shrilly and plaintively, he leaped from the bridge, dashed into the dark at the ragged side of the ravine, and disappeared. The students tumbled after. They made some noise in scrambling down, but when they reached the bed of the brook they were all still.

The man was lying half in, half out of the water; his head was turned upon his arm, as if he had been asleep on his own pillow; he did not stir as the crowd poured down into the brook and clambered over the rocks to reach him. The janitor held his lantern up, and some of the students knelt down in the wet beside their professor and tried to put their arms under him. They were more startled by the repose than by the pallor of his face. He did not move, and the boys were puzzled what to do. A couple of seniors from the medical school came down, and with the assurance of their inexperience officiously offered advice; but no one seemed disposed to take it. Some one on the bridge above called:

"Here's Prexy! Wait for Prexy!"

Walled In

And another voice said, "Go for a doctor, somebody!"

"We'll do that," replied the chief of the department. He and one of the firemen got into their own motor and whirled away eagerly.

To this episode the injured man paid no attention. Only once when they moved him slightly he groaned. The spaniel, unnoticed by any one, had crept up out of the dark, and was now lying with his head and front paws upon his master's breast.

"Come, Philos," said one of the boys, "that won't do. It might make it hard for him to breathe."

He put out a hand, but the dog began to growl. When they tried again to remove him he snapped. Spaniels are not snarlers; it takes the ultimate emergency of anguish or terror to force them into vicious ill-nature. The students avoided a contest with Philos, not being able to forecast its effect upon his master, and so let the little creature stay where he was.

"I'm afraid it won't make much difference anyhow," said the short-sighted student. His round glasses were so misty that he took them off and wiped them very slowly, as if he had been an old man.

When Myrton Ferris reached a knowledge of himself he perceived that he was still lying where he had left himself—upon the rocks, a broken man. His arm awoke before his eyes did, and feebly closed upon the warm body of the clinging dog.

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The sense that he was surrounded by human arms and faces did not arrive until after the other; but when it did it came in a form as minute as it was powerful. Every detail of his condition and position was perfectly clear to him. He recognized every face which the faint, smoky lantern-light revealed; beyond, in the darkness he recognized every faceless voice.

The janitor held the nearest lantern, and so his scared features took the foreground. The professor tried to say:

"Taker! Carl Taker! You got here at last, didn't you?" but no one understood him. His eyes in his motionless head rolled feebly from one to another of his boys; the short one, Brander, and the big catcher, and a fellow whom he had meant to mark to-morrow for cutting prayers. The boys were all pale; some of them brushed their eyes with their young hands; he felt grateful to the boys for being sorry for him, but he wished there had been some one else—some older man. Quite suddenly, as if it had been wrought out of the ravine, carved from rocks and wet and darkness, he saw, hanging close above him, the finely modelled countenance of a gray-haired man. The stern lip of the college president quivered under his iron-gray mustache. Tears were storming down his cheeks, nor did he try to conceal them at all.

He put his hand gently under the bruised shoulder of his favorite colleague, and with the other patted the injured man upon the cheek.

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A whimsical smile floated across the professor's face.

"Oh, President Hildreth!" he said. "You'll be late to faculty meeting."

Physicians had now reached the spot. The fire department had drafted a homœopath, and the students had brought an allopath, but the twain—irreconcilable foes in the presence of little cases—joined hands and hearts before the mortal emergency. They did not remember or chose to forget that they could not "consult"; recalling all their surgery, and disregarding their therapeutics, they flung their united skill—and it took all they had—into the difficult art of removing the mangled man. No layman would have dared to do it. The crowd stood back, with the respect for the healers of the world which physical extremity forces from the most thoughtless.

The two doctors, and the aids whom they selected—the janitor, the big catcher, one of the medical students, and the boy who was to have been marked to-morrow for cutting prayers—lifted the professor with the tenderness of women and the muscle of men. A stretcher had been improvised from somewhere, and he was laid as gently as possible upon it.

The president kept closely beside the stretcher, watching the face and holding the hand of his friend; he envied the younger men the opportunity to be bearers to the living dead.

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The little procession came up in perfect silence out of the ravine; Ferris groaned once. No one spoke until the group had gathered on the bridge and set their burden down. Then a policeman stepped out and touched his helmet. "Doctor," he said, "somebody thought you'd need the ambulance. I don't know where the order came from—"

"I do," interrupted the college president.

"Anyhow, it's here," finished the officer. "It moves pretty easy—it's the new one—the rubber-tired one."

"Look out there!" cried one of the boys. "You'll step on the dog."

"I want him," said Ferris, quietly. "He won't do any harm."

They were the only words he spoke, and were received as if they had been his last. When he was lifted into the ambulance (it had whirled over in three minutes from the hospital) his hands tightened upon the spaniel's body, but he made no sound. The students massed on either side as the ambulance started slowly away; they had dashed off their hats and stood bareheaded, every one.

Ferris felt a splash of air on his face; it was wet air, and he perceived that it had begun to rain. The door of the vehicle was opened, and he saw that he had reached his own home. Mr. Hildreth sat silently beside him. One of the doctors was searching for a pulse; the other stood talking in

Walled In

low tones with a group of students who had followed the ambulance. The catcher was there, and the near-sighted boy, Brander, and the fellow who would not be marked to-morrow for cutting prayers. Brander stepped out from the group towards the house, and uttered a significant whistle. This was immediately answered by another lad, who hurried down from the piazza, and the professor recognized Harry Sheffield. Harry returned with evident agitation into the house and disappeared. Ferris was perfectly conscious, more acutely so than he had been at any time since the accident; he perceived everything with a poignant vividness.

They had brought him to the side door, behind his study. The rain was spattering the tall cosmos, which seemed to cower before it. The door was open; the interior of the house looked like a bright, decorated screen; against its warm surface there suddenly crossed the outlines of a little boy.

No—she was not there, yet—only the child. Trip stood merrily dancing on his elfish toes. His shrill voice piped into the rain.

“Hello, Mommer! Papa’s got back. He’s got back in ‘e Tommybabel. He didn’t let me go too-oo-oo.”

Harry Sheffield came out and hushed the child, and somebody dragged Trip away. The bright, open door remained empty. A sharp feminine cry arose from somewhere and fell. The president gently laid down the hand of his friend, clambered

Walled In

out of the ambulance, and went into the house. He reappeared almost immediately with a lady on his arm, but left her alone in the doorway, and himself came back to the injured man.

"They think it best for you to rest a few minutes before going in," he said, with loving cheerfulness. The professor did not answer. His drawn face was turned so that he could watch the woman who stood in the open door. It was as if she leaned for support against the screen of decorated light; there was a palm in the hall, behind her, and a silk portière blown by the now rising wind twisted itself about her dainty outlines; her dress was light—silk above, broadcloth below; she still held across her arm the little embroidered jacket that she had worn to the ball game. She was yet a young woman, some years younger than her husband; and had the species of girlishness which some women carry with obstinate success from sixteen to sixty; her pretty features were immature; her eyes and hair were very black; her under lip, ripe and childish, was put up like a baby's; she was crying openly; she seemed to be shaking with fright. A weak voice struggled from the ambulance:

"Never mind, Tessa! It might be worse—my dear."

The college president went up the steps and spoke to her.

"Wouldn't you like to go and see him before they bring him in?" he asked, with some sharpness.

Walled In

"I am—afraid," said Tessa, shivering. "Does he look—very badly?" But she began to move down the steps slowly.

"Myrton! Myrton!" she called, sobbing. "Are you in there?"

"Never mind, President Hildreth," entreated the voice from the ambulance. "Spare her all you can. My wife is not—she has a constitutional dread of—" The words trailed off.


They lifted him as mercifully as they could, and carried his poor crushed body into his own study; they laid him on the broad bed-couch in the alcove and left him there. He felt upon his face the dropping of men's tears; this mingled confusedly in his troubled mind with the rain outside upon the cosmos, whose white and lake and crimson eyes seemed to peer in at the open window—crying, too. Upon his breast he still wore their order; one white blossom, splashed now with piteous red.

The perfume of the cosmos floated into the study like a breath without power to spend itself in articulation. It was a perfume difficult to capture or to classify—delicate, but persistent, wild and woody, yet tamed and tender. He had always loved it; he had fancied that he understood it. Now, when all men and women evaded his consciousness, the soul and sense of the flower followed him into the abyss down which he slipped. Nature companioned him whom human power could not. The scent of the wet cosmos was the last thing that he remembered.

Walled In

The spaniel had sprung up and curled himself upon the foot of the couch. The dog kissed and clung to the mutilated figure which the wife had not yet touched. But his master did not notice Philos.

III

HE injured man's lips moved, but his words were not audible to the doctors. They were all there still—the homœopath, and the allopath, and now the family physician, whose familiar face, with its kind, plain features, deeply lined by thirty years of hard country and college practice, hung like a medallion in mid-air, bodiless and unrelated, before the professor's eyes; these saw, as yet, but in a strange fashion, bisected horizontally with a band of light above, and a streak of dark below; the old doctor's head swung into the bright belt, and from the black one something struggled up, and fell down again, as an amphibious creature climbs out of muddy water, uncertain in which element to stay.

The amphibian was a woman. As the power of the ether diminished upon Ferris, the power of the woman increased upon him. The woman seemed, in fact, to fill the world. Life was the woman, and the woman was life.

Is the infinite surrender which we call death a weakness or a strength? Ferris was confusedly conscious, even then, of putting the question—a

Walled In

familiar one to his habit of mind. It used to be an idle intellectual amusement or skirmish; it had assumed the swift intensity of personal experience. Whether out of a more vigorous condition of being he had battled back to a less, or whether from a less he had returned to a more—at all events, he had returned. When he was a lad in the country there was a small, round pond in the meadows out beyond the village. It was known as the bottomless pit, and it was said that no man had ever been able to fathom it. The children used to go and stand on its edge, quaking, and throw their little plummets into its green surface. Ferris thought of that sickly, small, green pond. He seemed to himself to have tottered into it, a terrified child, and then to have clawed his way up from its bottomless gulf.

He did not ask anybody if he were going to live. He felt that he should. He should live—to be a trouble to Tessa. Tessa was sitting very properly beside the couch—oh yes, and picturesquely enough. Tessa would be picturesque whether he lived or died. Her intensely black eyes (she had Italian blood in her, two or three generations back) were smarting with impulsive tears; these rolled, but did not redden; she had her charming look; her babyish lip was quivering; she had put on her embroidered jacket, and a foamy, crimson-edged Persian scarf was floating about her throat; no doubt the room was too cold for her; the windows in the alcove were flung wide, and a few drops of rain

Walled In

ventured in; one or two struck her pale, pearl broadcloth skirt, and she wiped them away carefully. Ferris, in his bandages, lay staring upon her. After a hesitation, he feebly put out his hand. The doctors turned their backs, and two other persons who were in the room left it abruptly.

Tessa laid her little fingers in her husband's cold, weak grasp. She began to sob without restraint:

"Myrton! Myrton! . . . Does it hurt you dreadfully? I would have stayed, but they wouldn't let me. You know how ether affects me—they said I couldn't be any help. I made them promise to call me the moment you came to. . . . What can I do for you? Wouldn't you like another pillow?

. . . I told Ann to air the sheets," added Tessa, with a certain complacency in having thought of it. "They said you couldn't be moved to-night . . . you poor old boy!"

Tessa finished with real, stinging tears whose effect upon her appearance she did not consider; nobody was looking but Myrton. Her last four words were quite genuine; they seemed to the husband to be compact with womanly feeling and wifeliness; he could not remember when Tessa had spoken to him in that way. His head swam—he was so weak. The moment seemed to him worth its cost—anything, yes anything, that would make Tessa turn to him like this. He would have plunged and broken his body and soul down any chasm outside (or perhaps inside) of hell for Tessa's responsive tenderness. He loved his wife so much as that.

Walled In

"Teasie!" he said, brokenly. "Teasie dear!"

Tessa began to sob again. She stooped towards him, and kissed his bandaged face impulsively. It was not a very gentle kiss; it hurt him; but he would have perished of the pang before he would let her know that. His hollow eyes grew luminous with a deep, inward joy like that of a smouldering fire which flares when it is fanned.

"Poor Teasie!" He spoke as if it had been Teasie who met with the accident. "Don't mind it, girl—so much."

The excitement of this short interview with his wife exhausted him more than he would have believed possible; his head grew limp on his pillow, and Tessa, in her thoughtless way, cried aloud for help. The doctors re-entered the room hurriedly; Mr. Hildreth anxiously joined them; he was followed by the junior student, Harry Sheffield.

"There are too many of us," said the family doctor, peremptorily.

When Ferris recovered himself the strange physicians had gone away, and the others were about to follow them. Sheffield, who had crossed the room, returned abruptly, and without asking permission of any one, knelt by the couch of his professor. His young, indeterminate face was real with emotion.

"Just tell me this," he pleaded, "and then I'll go. Was it my fault? Did I do anything wrong—to the machine?"

"My dear boy—no. Not a thing."

Walled In

"Trip told me to fire her up," urged Sheffield. "He said you wanted me to."

"He did—did he? The rascal!" A wry smile twisted the father's face. "His mother and I must reckon with Trip. No, my lad—no. Don't distress yourself. The machine—I think the machine shied. Nothing left of her, is there? Thank you, Harry."

Ferris regarded his favorite student affectionately. Harry left the room without speaking again; his head fell forward a little.

"I think," said Tessa, in a few minutes, "that I had better make sure Ann has done those things the doctors wanted her to." Tessa, too, went out. Mr. Hildreth, it appeared, was about to follow her, but Ferris detained him.

"You'll tell them, won't you, that I meant to be at the faculty meeting? About those electives—would you mind taking my proxy, President Hildreth? You know where I stand—particularly about the Greek. We must work together to carry that. I—am disappointed not to be at the faculty meeting."

The older man put out a shaking hand; he could not speak, and did not try; he left the room abruptly.

Ferris found himself alone with his own doctor, who, it appeared, had prepared to stay the night out. It was some time before Mrs. Ferris returned, and when she did, the doctor sent her away.

Walled In

"You will need your sleep," he said, curtly. He tried to remove the dog, but Ferris entreated him:

"Don't you see? It's all I have."

Philos remained upon the foot of the couch. The spaniel's wide eyes seemed not to receive sleep; now and then he softly licked the spot where the blankets covered the feet of his master; he did not stir to move upward where the dear hand lay lest he jar the suffering man. Philos had a super-canine gentleness. It surpassed the tenderness of any woman whom Ferris had ever known.

However it might have been with Philos, the old doctor did not sleep at all. Instant and able, he gave the patient the impression of omnipresent, if not omniscient mercy. He was not a great physician, but he was an honest one—he never assumed a case for which he was not equipped—and Ferris trusted him. He felt grateful to the doctor, but perceived that he need not take the trouble to say so, as the two went down together into the depths of that unfathomable night. It seemed, like the small round pond, to be without a bottom.

Ferris did not ask the old doctor whether he were going to live. He was afraid he should.

He was still afraid to ask questions when the surgeon from Boston, and the surgeon from New York—the cousin of Tessa's, summoned at her wish—were brought to Routledge in his behalf. It was noon, and a warm one, and the window tow-

Malled In

ards the cosmos was open from the top. The screen was removed for the winter. One crimson flower stretched into the room and regarded him with its golden eye while the surgeons were at work. When they had finished, the surgeon from New York shut the window and beheaded the cosmos. Ferris uttered an exclamation.

"What's the matter?" asked the surgeon from Boston.

"He has hurt it," explained the patient.

"Hurt what?" demanded the surgeon from New York.

"Why, the flower."

The surgeons exchanged glances. Their scientific eyes said, "He is still wandering." They went into another room to finish the consultation, but the old family doctor lingered long enough to pick up the guillotined cosmos and put it in the patient's hand; he knew pretty well how the professor felt about flowers; perhaps he took the trouble to think what "people of importance" these delicate friends were likely to become to this mangled life; this was the more kind in the country doctor, because he was laboring under intense and quiet excitement; he did not consult with eminent men from New York or Boston often, and had never had the proud privilege of calling two to one case before. Then, it could not be denied that he was attached to the patient.

Ferris lay still with the beheaded cosmos in his hand. Through the closed door the monotonous

Walled In

murmur of the surgeons' lowered voices reverberated like cannon in his ears. Trip ran thumping across the hall, and slammed two doors. Philo, outside, was barking at the horses with the bitterness of the gentle when aroused. Plainly, Philo attributed his master's misfortunes to the medical profession. Ferris smiled and fingered—although, being a flower-lover, he did not destroy—the petals of the crimson cosmos.

“They save me—
Save me not,
—Save me.
—— not,”

he repeated. The old doctor came back presently, and said good-bye; he observed that a surgical nurse would be sent from the city. Ferris made no inquiries, and the old doctor took the Boston surgeon to the train. The New York surgeon stayed to luncheon with Tessa. Tessa was charmingly dressed that morning in her house gown with the touch of orange—not too much—and looked ten years younger than she was. She came in kindly enough and asked Myrton if there were not something she could do, but she hurried back to her cousin. Ferris could hear their voices, but not their words; they were sitting upon the sofa in the hall before the fireplace. The hall opened through the centre of the large house; from it, at right angles, another passageway ran to the study; two doors intervened. Through these doors Tes-

Walled In

sa's soprano pierced; now and then she laughed. The two seemed to be having a good time. The injured man lay looking at the window where the green neck of the beheaded cosmos protruded. After a while the two in the hall stopped laughing, and Tessa, it seemed, stopped talking. Then Trip bumped, slamming in, and flung open all the doors he could find; shouting and calling his mother, he stamped back into the front hall, where he broke like a white squall. Tessa could be heard plainly, scolding the child—but prettily; she always scolded prettily before callers.

"Go right away, Tripsy, and be sure to shut the door."

Trip went away, but when had Trip ever been known to shut a door?

In shattered sentences the voice of the New York surgeon came stabbing across the considerable space between the study and the hall.

"No, I cannot give a positive prognosis."

"But—" persisted Tessa; her question was inaudible.

"Oh, if you want the truth—" The surgeon lowered his voice.

"I should think I might have it from *you*, Dick."

Tessa would coquet with Gabriel or Azrael. Ferris acknowledged as much to himself, but with more amusement than disturbance, in the definite pause before Dr. Pierpont said:

"The fractures are the least of it. Those we

Walled In

can— The wounds are not serious—at least, none but . . . the spine or brain. He will be disabled . . . perhaps crippled for . . .”

There, Trip shut the door. To say that he banged it was a matter of course; the stout house, built on honor, shook to its oaken nerves and sinews. The wounded man received the shock as the house did, without an outcry. He lay looking at the flower in his fingers.

Some one put it in water for him that afternoon, since he seemed to wish it. The next morning it was the only one of its family left alive. The “golden and glorious” October had died suddenly in the night. A stinging frost had bitten the world.

The song with the inadequate close that the professor used to give his classes clicked through his brain:

“Spent and retreated,
Autumn defeated!
Furl ye your banners—the battle is done!”

The cosmos, shrivelled through all its delicate anatomy, drooped outside the window, every star of it, every eye of it, quenched or closed.

In the vase on the table by the couch-bed the living flower regarded the dead ones. Ferris took it with his weak fingers; it lay upon his heart like a mystical and terrible order that he must wear.

IV



NOVEMBER is the athlete's month. Baseball is a memory, but golf dies hard, and football seems to have achieved a personal immortality. Routledge throbs with virile young life, and in the first crisp weather the college pulsed into every form of physical activity that its hot heart could fancy or its inventive head devise.

The disabled professor lay on his study couch and listened to the students tramping by; as they swung along they sang and shouted. The college seemed to have become all arms and legs and lungs. Muscle was the popular elective. Of what consequence was mere mind? What, indeed? It was but four weeks since the automobile shied, and he would have given his chair to be one of those boys—the roughest, the rawest, yes, the most stupid—anything that could hold a bat or a brassie, anything that could run and leap and roar in the masculine autumn air.

Tessa used to come in and tell him about the games; she said she thought it would amuse him. After the surgical nurse arrived, Tessa continued

Walled In

to go to the games. Sheffield came, too, and sat by his professor and talked the patois of the links:

"You know, sir, you used to say our club had a tournament every fifteen minutes. There's another one on for to-morrow."

The professor was fond of Harry Sheffield. The lad was privileged, and ran in and out like a younger brother or an elder son about the house. Sheffield was not a scholar, only a clean, sunny, sporting lad. All his talk (it struck the sick man) was of things that could be done with hands and feet, with arms and legs and lungs. He seemed to have no vocabulary but that of the campus and the links, the road and the field; he brought into the sick-room the sting of the happy weather, the wings of out-of-doors, the glories of muscular manhood, the ecstasies of paradise lost. The surgical nurse sent him away. She was a middle-aged woman, and had the insight of her experience; her cuffs were deep, and her cap was high; she wore spectacles with a line across the lens; the patient did not look at her when he could help it.

The study was twenty feet square; its alcove measured seven feet the narrow way, thus offering Ferris a map of existence covering twenty by twenty-seven feet. It had proved impossible or unsafe to move him; and then, as Tessa said, it would be so much easier to take care of him on the ground floor.

The alcove was protected by thin folding-doors,

Walled In

painted white, as all the interior decoration of the house was; these doors, though usually open, could be closed, if necessary, and one fold like the fly of a screen remained permanently fast at the foot of the bed-couch which the patient had retained by preference; it was a broad, modern affair, luxurious of its kind, than which nothing could be easier; he had some notion of his own about it which the nurse translated indulgently: "He likes to think that he is not quite sick abed."

Both the study and the alcove were alive with books; these climbed from floor to ceiling in deep white cases set into the thick walls. The professor's empty study-table stood just within range of his eyes.

Those travelled from a thick, green carpet to a cool, green papering, fortunately of a soft tint, undishonored by design. Tessa had put up a large portière as soon as it was decided that Myrton was to stay in the alcove; she regretted that the portière must be green (which was not Tessa's color), but distinctly felt that, as a background for her charming figure, it would hold more possibilities than white paint. There were two windows in the study, and in the alcove two; through one of these the dead cosmos looked in upon the disabled man; rather, one should say, it seemed to try to look, but could not, because it was dead. At the side of the couch was the inevitable small stand of the sick-room; across its petty dimensions, flowers, medicines, magazines, mail, and newspapers came

Walled In

and went as if they came or went not, before the indifferent eyes burning in the white face upon the pillow. Upon the floor in the corner Philo's basket stood against the white bookcase; the little dog had slept there every night.

"He will keep me awake crying wherever else you put him," Ferris had suggested. The astuteness of love prevailed, and Philos stayed beside his master; he made no more noise than a girl at a secret rendezvous; the spaniel moved stealthily, as if watched by unfriendly powers inclined to separate him from the beloved; he got in and out of his basket on padded tiptoe; when a thin hand hung down—sometimes it did hang down—from the edge of the bed, Philos crept up like a sigh and kissed it ecstatically.

There were some pictures in the study—not many, because books had dispossessed them, and the few which had crept in could not be seen from the couch; in the alcove there were none; the old paint was of bluish white, upon the folding-doors. Above the white surface of the bed Tessa had thrown a company face of light Oriental silk, patterned in gold and green. Ferris did not like it; he thought it effeminate; but he did not protest; he seldom protested at anything Tessa did; when he particularly resented the silk counterpane, he pushed it off. It was beginning to occur to him that he could use his hands.

There, in that comfortable hell, the hurt man raved.

Maled In

He raved, but it was without speech or language. The smoke of his torment went up silently. It did not take him long to find out that there is no common vocabulary between the sick and the well.

At first, with the naïveté of a man who had never been ill, he commented upon the tragic miracle—clearly, it could be no less—of which he was the victim. What black diviner had ordained that he, Myrton Ferris, should not be able to move? What natural law could have pinioned his proud physical personality? If he had been some anæmic, stooping professor, narrow-chested, faint-blooded, taking a decorous constitutional to the post-office or a pious ride in the family carryall—but six feet two, and forty-four chest measure, the finest deltoid on his old college team, the champion of the links, the winner of a dozen cups, put away on closet shelves at commencement time, lest they fail to reflect literary credit upon the chair when the trustees came (but boyishly visited and cherished when nobody was looking)—he, the subject of this infernal sorcery, the plaything of a monstrous fate, smitten at one stroke, from man to mummy—*he!*

He began by maintaining that the thing was impossible. He said so to the college president in a quiet, polemical manner such as he would have used in arguing a difficult proposition before his classes. He said so often to the doctor and the nurse; he called their attention in the tone of an

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advocate to the nature and variety of his sufferings; he inclined to arraign them for these, as if his misfortune were their fault; he levied their sympathy as a matter of course; it occurred to him that they were paid to give it, and that he had a right to its expression. He found in himself a tendency to stand upon this right. It was some time before the humorous side of it struck him. But one day it did.

The surgical nurse found his pillow wet.

"What's this?" she asked; at the worst of a bad case she had never seen her patient weep.

"I have been crying," the professor hastened to explain. "That is, I laughed until I cried. I couldn't help it. You must excuse me, Miss Binder. I am sure you will understand the—the absurdity of my position. Its full force has, I believe, but this moment struck me."

The surgical Miss Binder did not understand in the least; her professional training had taught her not to understand, but to accept; therefore had she risen to her present pinnacles.

"A sick man," argued Ferris, "expects, he really *expects*, people to care. He assumes that he is an object of interest to the able-bodied. He hands his physical miseries around, he offers his symptoms as if they were pink lemonade, or nuts and cider—something to entertain his friends with. He is the dispenser of an unconscious egoism—the host of his own agonies. He is subject to the most tremendous delusion outside of bedlam."

Walled In

Miss Binder gazed through the line that divided the lens of her spectacles; it was as if on one side of the line she could read the face of her distinguished patient, while on the other side she could not; the result was an optical obscuration, disturbing to a nurse with so high a cap and so deep a cuff.

"*Sir?*" said Miss Binder. "I am sure," she added, "that I have not found you a troublesome patient. There are plenty of them."

"Thank you, Miss Binder," said Ferris, more gently. He perceived that Miss Binder meant to pay him a compliment.

His barbaric impulse was to fling a pillow at her, and knock her glasses off, but a cripple is denied the luxuries of barbarism. He spent an hour wondering what would have happened if he *had* flung a pillow at Miss Binder. The hideous thing was that his mind was reduced to the infinite pettiness of the unoccupied. He had only Miss Binder to look at.

Tessa was much in demand by the students who were training for the great game before Thanksgiving. Tessa maintained that the sacred duty of a professor's wife was to interest herself in the students. Her husband had never combated this view of their professional relations to the college, nor had he seen any reason to do so. He had regarded her half-maternal, half-coquetish attitude towards the boys with the amused tolerance of a busy man for the caprice of a charming and idle woman.

Walled In

If it occurred to him now that the surgical Miss Binder, considered as the sole solace of a desperate and desolate cripple, had her visible limitations, he did not complain. He seldom did complain to Tessa, or of her. He was used to expecting little of his wife, exacting nothing, and receiving what she chose to give.

Indeed, he felt that Tessa had, on the whole, been kind to him since the accident. He was sure that she had tried to do the proper thing, or even the wifely one; she looked after his meals conscientiously, and sat with him generally two hours when the nurse was off duty. As Tessa said, she must save her strength. Married happiness, like most things, is chiefly a matter of definitions. Ferris had long ago perceived that he and his wife defined the nature and domain of love by a different lexicography. But he did not love her the less for that.

At first he had sometimes uttered even to her the occasional outcries of physical suffering which his experience of it wrung from him, and which, on the whole, it is natural to suppose that the closest relations of life may tolerate or even welcome. When he had said: "The pain is here," "The worst is there," "I have such and such distress," Tessa had returned a ladylike attention; she was never brutal. Once she had kissed him; he could remember but once. Then one day he heard her telling Harry Sheffield on the piazza how greatly her husband's sickness wore upon her. "It depresses me," she pleaded.



TESSA HAD RETURNED A LADYLIKE ATTENTION

Malled In

The hurt man turned his face upon the pillow; he looked out of the window at the skeleton cosmos whose little brown bones were stark against the November sky; he did not tell Tessa how he felt the next time she came in to see him.

It is one of the overlooked conclusions of human experience that heaven requires two, but hell needs only one. After the day when the surgical Miss Binder found him laughing till he cried, Myrton Ferris retreated slowly into the reticence of his lot. That touch of irony had saved the last defence of the sick—his self-possession. This protecting power is as delicate as the electric communication with a submarine mine, but as formidable. Beyond it neither insolent sympathy nor ignorant neglect can penetrate.

A finger tip upon an unseen button, and heaven and earth shall be rent. Hell, as we say, is left; and therein the besieged enters with his inestimable privilege—the right to bear his own pangs without expression or society.

Whether he had seen the worst, or only the first circle of his inferno, Ferris gradually ceased to ask himself. Something of the grimness of all intense resolve overtook him. Soul and body clinched to his fate. He was entirely occupied in bearing it decently.

Tessa said she thought he was very much better. She wrote to her cousin in New York and suggested that he come on at once. This Dr. Pierpont cor-

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dially agreed to do, and cheerfully spent an evening with Tessa, while the patient waited for the bass and soprano of their voices to subside from his ringing ears, so that he could go to sleep.

Ferris did not ask Dr. Pierpont any questions about his own condition. Perhaps he was still afraid to; perhaps he had the instinctive repugnance to being at a disadvantage before the family of his wife, which is as old as the marriage bond.

That had been one of the pleasant things about Tessa—she had never crowded the house with her relatives; she had not exacted of him that prolonged and wearing domestic entertainment of alien natures which a man of business can undertake without damage to his work, but a man of letters cannot.

In fact, Tessa did not think much about her relatives; these were few, and absorbed in their own affairs. Her parents were not living; her step-mother had never been attached to her. There was a step-sister, the child of another marriage—and this cousin. Ferris had only a vague and remote acquaintance with the members of his wife's family.

He listened to the irritating, uneven sounds of the bass and soprano in the long drawing-room beyond the hall. Every nerve of him struck high and low keys, as if he had been a human piano on which they played. The duet did not cease until eleven o'clock.

V



It has been said that the happiest people in the world are the convalescents. It now appeared that Myrton Ferris was preparing himself to be classified among this fortunate species. His hopes, like his wounds, had healed by the first intention. His courage, like his fractures, mended vigorously. He was by rights of so joyous and so wholesome a temper that the gloom of the sick-room dissipated far more easily than it had formed. Scarred, and weak, and wasted, he smiled up from his pillows like a boy recovering from a scrimmage at football.

He was surprised that he experienced any difficulty in leaving his bed. His knitted bones, his healing tissues, laughed. The blood beat in his veins. His athletic heart and his splendid, his savage digestion rallied to him—the allies of the scholar's out-of-door life, reinforcing his physical extremity. Not a stroke of the brassie on long, sunlit links in gleaming October afternoons but stood him in loyal stead. Not a feathered oar dripping in summer waves but nerved him now. Not a whirl on the wheel, not a tussle at the bat, not

Walled In

a grip on the alpenstock—no, not a record on the motor that had betrayed him—was wasted to him in the supreme contention between battling will and beaten body.

"It's to be man or mummy—as I said," he thought.

Now, while a moral malady can always be conquered by the determination to conquer it, a physical malady may or may not be; or may indeed be aggravated by the provocation of the effort.

Ferris's persistence of energy ebbed upon itself. He exhausted himself in the conflict with exhaustion, and impeded his recovery in demanding it. His purpose to get well was like a tide that had risen against a breakwater built in a new location. Experience had given him respect for his own will, as that of a successful scholar always does. He had spent his youth in the selection of values; he was expert in discarding the unimportant, in conquering the unruly, elements of life. He had obtained what he desired, and had done the things he chose. Position, preferment, honor, had come to him with no more than the happy effort which is the condition of being to a healthy and intellectual man. Everything so far had yielded to him like a ball to a driver, or a keel to a rudder; all things—except one. The only thing which had defied Ferris was that which he supposed himself to have mastered more absolutely than any other in the world—the softest, the slightest, the weakest—a woman; his; a wife.

Walled In

Tessa, as we say, was picturesque; she was also a little sentimental; the two are apt to unite. She had attacks of devotion, fluctuations of wifely solicitude. These became her like a new hat or a change in the mode. When the surgical Miss Binder was no longer considered necessary to the case, and had removed her cap, her cuffs, and her glasses to the Boston hospital whence they had emerged, Mrs. Ferris begged very prettily to be allowed to take care of her husband.

"He will not be so dependent," she argued. "He will be thrown more upon his own resources. This will be good for him."

"The case requires unremitting attention, Mrs. Ferris," said the old doctor, grimly. "I'll give you two weeks," he added.

But Ferris was touched by his wife's interest.

"If she cares," he pleaded, "if she really *wants* to take care of me—"

His eyes pursued her about the study and the alcove.

"He looks at me," she said to Harry Sheffield, "as Philos looks at him."

"How can he help it?" blurted the boy. This pleased Tessa, and she blushed. The color was waning delicately upon her cheek when she came into the sick-room. She had her bewitching look. Her husband observed it with pathetic admiration.

"Do you go on duty now?" he asked, holding out his hand.

"I go on privilege," said Tessa, prettily. She

Walled In

sat down demurely in a rocking-chair which squeaked when she moved; she moved a good deal. Except when Trip was a new baby, Tessa had never had to be quiet. She was as restless as a Brazilian butterfly—an iridescent, elusive thing.

"As beautiful," thought Ferris. A scorching divination in him added, "As light." But the husband refused to the nebula that floated across his mind the structure of thought.

Tessa brought her embroidery, and Ferris, smiling, watched her.

"What are you making, Teasie?"

"What a question! Why, I never know what I am making. Do you want it?"

"If it is a hot-water bag—or an ice-bag—something in my present line? Suppose you embroider me a nightcap. A bib and tucker would do."

"You are growing very bitter, Myrton," said Tessa. "You are not at all reconciled."

"*Reconciled!*" outburst from Myrton. "What in —— do you take me for? Did you marry a sarcophagus? Or a man?"

"You are very profane," reproved Tessa. "And you are ruining my butterfly."

"I beg your pardon, Teasie—are you making a butterfly, Teasie?"

"I like them," said Tessa; "they seem to be having a good time. They don't have to do things they don't want to."

"Don't have to take care of crippled husbands,

Walled In

do they, girl? . . . Teasie, I'm sorry for you. Upon my word, I am."

"Oh, you'll be about again before long," said Tessa, indifferently. "All you need is to exert yourself a little more. I'm sure, with your force of will—and reserve of character—"

Tessa's sentence dribbled away into a dash so long that her mind could not overtake it; she felt that force of will and reserve of character were strong phrases, and ought to be able to run alone.

Her hands moved in a rainbow of floss. She wore a white apron edged with fluted ruffles, and a little square cap, Mary Stuart-wise, lay upon her black hair. It occurred to Ferris that she was carrying her pose to the extent of the uniform, and he laughed outright. Tessa said she was delighted to find him so much better, and wouldn't it amuse him if Harry came in and told him about the tournament? So Harry came and told about the tournament. Trip came, too. Tessa said she thought a little young life would be good for his father. Trip flopped about the study like one of the German metal toys which are wound up to hop; he pulled at the books in the library; he had been making mud-pies.

"Papa," said Trip, "I have learned to spell long words. I can spell yoo liberry. Here's a book I can spell—'Insti-tu-tions of the Mind.'"

"Oh, take it away from him!" groaned the professor. "It's McCosh's *Intuitions*— Look at his fingers!"

Walled In

"Anyhow," persisted Trip, "here's a better one. 'Illustrated Hydro-phobia. In four Quarts.' I can spell," urged Trip; "why, I can spell *anything*."

Sheffield took the book and read aloud: "Illustrated Hydropathy. In four Parts."

"Oh, Papa," suggested Trip, pleasantly, "I gave Philo a whopping big barth, Monday. You couldn't. He was awful wet. I put him through the close-wringer to get him dry, but Ann she interfreed with me. Ann's always interfreeing—I wish you'd speak to Ann."

"Besides," bubbled Trip, "Philo was naughty this morning. He disobeyed at me. I shut him to punish him. I shut him in yoo trunk up garret, 'n' then I shut him in the coal-bin, 'n' then I shut him in the oven. It wasn't very warm, only just to hotten him a little. But Ann she interfreed with me again. So I shut him in the go-rash where the Tommybabel used to live. He's out there ever since. Papa, won't you tell him he disobeyed at me?"

"Oh, go out, Harry," pleaded the professor, "won't you, and release the dog? And, Tessa—suppose you take the boy. Take him and 'shut him' somewhere. He is running over you. He is getting the upper hand of everybody. Why not leave him in the garage for a while?"

But Tessa put up her lip; she looked enough like Trip to be his little sister.

"I don't approve of shutting children into places," she said, distinctly. She turned her

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head with a slow motion of the neck that Ferris knew well. She had the obstinacy of a weak, attractive woman. It would have been easier in his able days for him to have floored a formidable man in the ring than to make Tessa do what she did not choose. She laid aside her butterfly with a wounded air, and pulled Trip along by his dirty little fingers. A fluff of prismatic floss floated back from her and hovered in the air for a moment, then drifted down.

Sheffield did not return. Ferris lay looking out of the window. He saw Tessa run bareheaded, with the lace on her hair, to help Harry unlock the garage. The wind took her dress and the pretty mock of the nurse's apron and twisted them about her moving limbs. The dress was crimson, of the tint that is dull in the shade and brilliant when the sun touches it. She fluttered in the wintry gale like a maple leaf that was uncertain whether to fly or to fall.

Trip pranced about her as if he had been a puppy. She did not obey his father's wish about the child. She looked as irresponsible as the boy. In the cold sunlight she laughed and shivered, tossed back to the house, and disappeared from the range of the sick man's eyes. These clouded for a moment, but cleared cheerfully. Why exact or expect of Tessa? She was a creature to be caressed, or crushed; there was no median way to treat her.

Philos, released from the "go-rash"—his tail down, nose down, ears up—flew to the house like

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love unchained, dashing headlong to his master, upon whom he lavished the passionate sympathy of one who had but just learned by experience what imprisonment meant.

It was some time before Tessa returned to the study. When she did she found Myrton lying quietly; his wasted cheek was turned upon the little dog's; both seemed to be asleep. Tessa sat smiling, as one smiles at some fresh and pleasant recollection, while she finished her butterfly. The rocking-chair creaked as she moved. Myrton did not wake, or did not speak. It did not occur to Tessa to ask herself which.

It was perhaps a couple of weeks after that the college president came in. Ferris received him with a touching eagerness. In the industrious, secluded, and able faculty these two alone had known a wider than the academic life. They were accustomed to the things which travel, leisure, society, and pecuniary ease add to a man, or subtract from him.

The freemasonry of what, for lack of a better word, it is the fashion to describe as the initiated classes, had drawn them, and a real affection had held them together. Ferris had long recognized in the other that temperament which goes to make what we call a man of public affairs. Hildreth was marked at Washington by an administration distinguished for its selection of strong men; and sometimes Ferris felt in his friend an accelerating

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restlessness which a man of that type is not likely to control unless he must. In his own mind, Ferris did not believe that any country college could retain Hildreth many years.

For some reason that day, Mr. Hildreth was constrained and distrait; he had, in fact, the manner for which the sick are accustomed to watch, in the well—that of consciously sparing one something which one would prefer not to be spared. The professor scrutinized his friend.

“He has been persuaded to take an appointment,” thought Ferris. “We are going to lose him.”

Hildreth talked steadily—almost too steadily—about the college. He clung to the topic so that Ferris shrewdly suspected him of having come upon a personal rather than a professional errand, and one which, for some reason, he shrank from introducing.

“I can have my classes in here—can’t I?” urged Ferris, “as soon as I get on my feet. I don’t know that it is necessary to wait for that. We could move the furniture about, and get in camp-chairs and manage. I shall be at my post next term, anyhow.”

“Do not concern yourself. Do not feel hurried,” returned Hildreth. “We have divided your work among us very comfortably. We shall wait for you till—”

“You *can’t* divide my work!” interrupted Ferris, irritably. “Would you have the Chemical Chair translate Browning—*my* Browning—for those cubs?”

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What would you assign to Mathematics—'The Skylark'? or 'Kubla Khan'?"

"You're not feeling as well as usual to-day, are you?" observed Hildreth, kindly.

"You needn't suppose you deceive me. Not in the least!" cried the sick man. "You are doing it—all this—yourself. It will be the last snowflake on the avalanche. You will begin to be tired of the whole thing, and you won't know why. What does it matter? Give my work to the Agricultural School—or the Medical! Get some red-handed vivisector to carve the heart-beats out of 'In Memoriam' for my bereaved classes—no—better reserve 'The Ancient Mariner' for *him*. . . . You are too valuable to Routledge to be expended on this accursed accident. . . . I think perhaps I could manage a lecture in here next week. The only thing is . . . I can't. . . . President Hildreth, you won't tell anybody, will you? But *I can't read* . . . yet. I have such a feeling—such a distress there . . . and here." Ferris clasped his hands on his head; his lips wavered; the boy in his eyes looked out piteously at his friend.

"Do you sleep?" asked Hildreth, abruptly.

"No," said Ferris; "that's just it. I am getting well—of course, as you see, I am getting well all the time. But lately, just this week, and last, I don't sleep. I don't suppose that's so very important. But the trouble is, *I don't bear it* not to be able to sleep. Some men do. I don't seem to be one of them."

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"I have no experience of that misfortune," said the president, slowly and with gravity. "I cannot presume to say that I know anything about it. But I know enough to know that I don't. That's something, perhaps. I think you will get out of it."

He paused; he found himself recalling cases he knew that never had got out of it. With some abruptness he changed the subject.

"By the way, as I was coming over I met that junior—young Sheffield."

"Yes?" said the professor. His face stiffened into attention like a lounging soldier summoned to dress parade.

"He is running up too many marks," suggested Mr. Hildreth, leaning back in the adipose easy-chair which stood by the invalid's couch for the comfort of his visitors.

"I dare say. He has gone in for athletics too hard."

"He is off a good deal. He cuts recitations. He will get suspended if he doesn't look out. I've known his father a good while. I should be sorry if it came to disciplining the boy."

The two men regarded each other quite steadily and in silence. The countenance of the elder passed indefinitely upon its guard.

"I see," said the professor.

"I met him on the campus," continued the president, carelessly. "Mrs. Ferris and that lively dog of yours were with him. It occurred to me—"

Walled In

"Yes?" interrupted Ferris again.

"Possibly Mrs. Ferris might give him a hint, a warning of some kind. He might take it from a lady—that sort of boy does—when he wouldn't listen to us."

"I see," repeated the professor. He spoke so quietly that his friend was half deceived, and had opened troubled lips to say,

"Excuse me; you do not see," but they closed without another word. A single sigh, slow, low, and ineffably sad, escaped the sick man.

"Not that it is very important, at least not yet," Mr. Hildreth hurried to explain himself.

"Oh, of course not," said Ferris, lightly.

His sigh ceased in a deplorable smile. The two men did not look at each other as they shook hands, and Mr. Hildreth went away.

From his bed the professor could see across the skeleton cosmos, through twisted arms of naked elms, the Doric pillars of the president's house. It was snowing—a reluctant, genial snow, whose heart was half rain. Hildreth walked through the white blur rapidly and went straight home. He did not look back at the window—he sometimes did—where he knew the sick man lay and watched his dear, familiar figure. He meant to spare, and not to hurt; but the imagination of the fortunate cannot follow the mind of the denied. Ferris wondered at the omission, and explained it on several suppositions, either of which increased his discomfort.

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At dusk Tessa came dimpling in. She asked whether he could get along without her that evening. One of the secret societies, which are so powerful in college life, and even outside of it, was giving a public entertainment.

"It's Alpha Theta," urged Tessa. "It's an operetta. It's in the Hall, and everybody is going. The boys depended upon me, but I said I couldn't leave you. But now they've sent—a committee after me. Do you think—if Ann sat where she could hear your electric bell *all* the time? I wouldn't leave you alone for the world if you didn't wish me to, you know, Myrton. I'll do exactly as you say, of course."

Tessa pushed the furs back from her wine-colored cloth costume. She wore ermine, which her husband disliked, although he had never said so. Where would be the use? She smiled and sparkled above the white, hunted things whose death decorated her vital beauty.

She was a dressy little person, in a well-bred way—one of the women who look particularly well in their winter clothes; one of those who compel the embarrassing question: How much more soul has she than her furs used to have?

"I see—you don't want me to. I won't go," repeated Tessa. She folded her ermine collar with the slightly injured expression that Ferris knew so well. He held out an indulgent hand. Tessa rose as he did so, and her muff dropped into his fingers. He stroked it a moment before he said:

Walled In

"Teasie, do you know how they catch these pretty creatures—for you?"

"Oh, I never read those animal stories," pouted Tessa. "I believe they're made up out of whole—whole fur."

"This is different from the others," urged Ferris, gently. "The ermine is so dainty. It is a lady, Teasie. It won't let anything touch it that ought not to—anything that is not quite clean; it is so white, you see. It will not step into the mud. You can't frighten it—you can't hunt it into a place where it will get spattered; not to save its life. It will stand still instead, and be taken and killed."

"I shouldn't think that would be worth while," argued Tessa. "Couldn't it go into the brook afterwards and take a bath?"

A glint in her black eyes answered the blue fire of her husband's gaze. What did Myrton mean? Plainly, he had one of what Tessa called his allegorical attacks. She took the muff and hid her hands in it, with a hard motion, crushing the ermine against her soft body.

"You see, I'm not a class, Myrton. It's a pity to waste good rhetoric on me. The department will need it all. Well, I'll go and tell the boys I can't go. Harry will explain. I'll get my things off, and I'll come and read to you," added Tessa, with a certain dejected cheerfulness peculiar to herself when she was obliged to do something that she did not like. With every fibre of her body and

Walled In

spirit Tessa hated illness, and the care of the sick. It was as if the intervening civilization had been left out of her, which stood between herself and some savage ancestor who had pushed on his way, leaving infancy and age and weakness and disease to perish without a glance behind him. Myrton turned his head on his pillow wearily.

"Oh, go, Tessa. I can manage, somehow. Just ask Ann to sit in the dining-room—or some place where she *can* hear the bell. I'll get along. I had much rather you'd go."

"No," reiterated Tessa, in her soft, unconquerable tone, "I'm not going. After dinner I shall read to you."

This, with her inexorable purpose to fill the sacrificial rôle when it suited her, she did.

Tessa did not like to read aloud, and seldom offered to. But when she determined to do so she persisted like a phonograph till the cylinder of her caprice was exhausted.

"There's a paper by that Yale man on 'Good Usage in English Style,'" suggested Ferris, turning over the magazines hungrily.

Tessa objected that she would as soon read a Chinese grammar.

"I suppose it *is* heavy for you, Teasie. Could you stand a little Keats? I noticed an illustrated article somewhere—it had copies of his best portraits. You might not find it oppressive. It is very short."

But Tessa did not favor Keats, whom she dis-

Walled In

missed as "tragic." She urged that Myrton should not be allowed to listen to anything professional; it would have a tendency to keep him awake. She chose an automobile story by a popular author, and rippled through it merrily.

Ferris turned his face to the wall, and did not speak when Tessa had finished the automobile story.

"Are you asleep, Myrton?" asked Tessa, distinctly. The sick man did not answer. He had not slept two hours out of the last forty-eight. To give him fifteen minutes' unconsciousness, a woman who loved him would have read to him half the night.

The blood pumped through his famished brain at the thoughtlessness of his wife; for a moment his bare soul characterized it in phrases stronger than he was accustomed to apply to Tessa, no matter what she did. But he did not utter them. Tessa sat fidgeting in the adipose easy-chair for a little while, and then she tiptoed out. She left the doors open that she might pass without sound, or return. But she did not return.

The genial snow-storm, now transmigrating rapidly into rain, was blurring all the windows, and splashing the college people who were going to the play. The night was warm, and growing warmer. The students were noisy that evening. The professor listened to the tramp of a thousand feet outside his windows. Somewhere somebody started the college yell:

Walled In

“Routledge!
Routledge!
Hi-ho-rah!”

Then from out of the melting storm came that music than which there is none more moving in the world, to which the oldest and the saddest and the strongest of us yield all the heart we have—the power and pathos of young, male voices singing in the night.

“Nelly was a lady,”

sang the Routledge boys.

Ferris lay listening to the song. A single slow tear escaped his closed eyes; he swept it furtively away, as if some one had seen it.

The night grew warm—it grew very warm. The registers in the study were open, and the room began to become unendurably hot. He called his wife, gently; he felt sorry to trouble her.

“Teasie? Would you mind coming back to shut my register? . . . Teasie?”

But Teasie did not answer.

“Ann?” called Ferris, in a startled voice. But Ann did not hear. With growing discomfort he touched the electric bell. It resounded throughout a silent house. Philos got up, whined, and returned to his basket. The dog was panting as if he had run five miles.

The atmosphere of the room had now become apoplectic. Rain was dashing on the double win-

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dows, and no means of reducing the temperature was within reach of the deserted invalid. The blood boiled in his brain and hammered on his temples. His watch told him—it was now half-past ten—that he had been alone and unattended for two hours and a half. Driving through two large old-fashioned registers, the force of a powerful mid-winter furnace fire seemed to singe the room. The helpless man lay scorching in it. His breath shortened as his pulse bounded up. The crimson of his face slowly crept to purple. His distress was such that when Philos barked suddenly, leaping from his basket, his master paid no attention to the fact, nor did he notice that the dog had left the room.

The heat of the study was now so intense, the man so weak and so fevered by lack of sleep, that there was really an element of danger in the situation. Half conscious of this, Ferris struggled to the edge of his bed and put his feet upon the floor. Gasping with the effort, and with the fiery atmosphere in which his head spun like a falling star, he paused to gather strength. At this moment he began to be imperfectly aware of voices in the long front hall. These were subdued to whispers, which were punctuated by abrupt silences. While he sat wrestling with the confused impressions that they made upon him, a single sound, significant and sibilant, penetrated his whirling brain, and seemed to remain there and hiss.

With a mighty effort he got to his feet, tottered upon them for a moment, and fell.

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The three came running in—Philos, Tessa, and Sheffield. Tessa rushed to the register, but Sheffield broke a window and let the wet air in. Shocked words rose to the young athlete's lips, but for some reason he did not speak them as his strong arms lifted his professor to the bed.

Instead, the boy said, excitedly, "I'll go for the doctor. Let me by—quick!"

He pushed past Mrs. Ferris a little roughly, and Ferris heard the front door open and shut. Tessa began to say something—Myrton could not have told what; he believed it was something about the broken window; he looked at her confusedly; it seemed to him that if he did not speak, and so have done with it, he should not live to speak again.

Without prelude or apology, he said:

"Tessa! Tell me precisely what has happened."

"Why, I went to the play, that's all," protested Tessa. "You were sleeping like a cemetery, and I didn't think it would do any harm. Ann promised to sit in the dining-room—I shall dismiss Ann to-morrow. Nobody thought the play would be so long. I didn't think—I didn't suppose—I didn't intend—"

"Oh, I don't mean that," deprecated Ferris, feebly. "Never mind about the play. It's something that happened afterwards. Out in the hall—I thought I heard—I'm sure, Tessa, I must have been mistaken; but I did think—you know one can hear everything in here when the doors are open—and I distinctly heard—"

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His voice dropped upon one worried word.

Tessa, rising above him in her wine color and white fur, seemed to blaze all over. Ferris perceived, although he found it hard to believe, that she threw up her chin and laughed.

"Why, I was kissing Philos good-night," she said, good-naturedly. "You *must* have been delirious," she added, in a slow, contemptuous voice.

He did not reply, and Tessa put her soft hand—not gently—upon his shoulder.

"Myrton! Myrton!" she called, loudly. "Wake up! Here's the doctor coming!"

But Myrton did not stir.

... "What in hell have you been doing to him?" cried the old doctor. He turned upon Tessa savagely. His plain, familiar, merciful face had assumed the prerogatives of an accusing angel. Its expression struck Tessa cold. She cowered into her ermine.

VI



OW and then the students tried, in bungling boys' ways, to express sympathy with their favorite professor. It became—nobody ever knew quite how—the fashion not to tramp like bashi-basouks past the white house with the wings. Some one had suggested that the fellows take the other side of the street.

“Ferry won't hear us so plainly over there.”

Whether it were necessary for Ferry to be kept awake by hearing them at all, was a view of the case to which the imagination of the gentlest lad in the college had not soared. It was assumed in Routledge, as it is the well world over, that a boy must be a boy, though men or women perish as a consequence. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever may be, the songs and shouts of the students racked the night, tore the nerves of the sick, and whipped the sleep from insomniac eyes. Before the winter was over, Ferris had begun to suspect that he was not likely to recover unless he could get outside of a college town. Nevertheless, the boys were sorry for him, and would have taken some trouble in his behalf, if they had known how.

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The lad whom he had never marked for cutting prayers remembered that the professor cared for flowers, and used to contribute to the adornment of the sick-room big bouquets on wire stems squatted in wads of evergreen.

The near-sighted boy with the round glasses asked timidly one day to be allowed to come in, and proudly presented a radiometer for the invalid's entertainment.

"It looked so jolly in the laboratory," said Brander, holding it awkwardly to the light. "I thought it might amuse you, sir, on sunny days."

The exquisite instrument in its globe of glass spun madly in the boy's fingers, yearning to the winter sun as if its heart would burst for joy of light.

"What's that, Brander? Oh, I see—a Crookes's tube. Thank you, Brander. No doubt I shall find it very amusing. But what is it going to do on dark days, my lad?"

The radiometer slid slowly out of the sunbeam; the student slipped it into the shadow of a curtain, and the professor watched the dancing thing, which fell as if it had fainted in a waltz, dragged itself along for a dismal revolution or two, and ceased to stir altogether.

"I suppose, sir," ventured the boy, in an undertone, "it will have to wait for some more light."

He put the radiometer down hard on the table and stumbled out of the room, embarrassed lest he had said the wrong thing, or too much of the right one.

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Ferris lay thoughtfully watching the radiometer—merry, mysterious, and sensitive.

"Like the heart of a fine boy," thought the professor.

Brander was the last man in the college of whom he should have expected this kind of thing.

"A man might teach these lads a lifetime before he would know how," he mused, "and I—I had just begun."

It proved to be a cold winter, and a very dark one. On more days than it danced on the window-sill the radiometer stood sullenly still.

Ferris had now to turn a new page in the Book of Pain; he had to experience an invalid winter in the New England climate. He met it uncomplainingly, not because he would, but because he must. He fought it with a formidable silence. He rebelled like Lucifer in frosted chains. He made no pretence of what is called resignation. As Tessa said, he was "unreconciled." He had ceased to discuss his fate with his wife. This, since the night of the Alpha Theta play, had assumed a grave outlook. Even Tessa admitted that Myrton had suffered a relapse. She would have been more sorry for him if she had been able to convince herself that she was in no way to blame for it. It always made Tessa hard to be put in the wrong.

Between the husband and wife a constraint which neither could overcome had slowly formed. Tessa did not know what to make of it. It vexed

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her more than it grieved her. She was accustomed to being taken by Myrton for better or worse, as the one adorable and fascinating woman in the world. She had accepted his idolatry as a matter of course. At times it had struck her as troublesome, but it had never occurred to her that it might not be eternal. Now she felt that she was in the grip of an incredible criticism upon which her dimple had no effect, and against which her new lace evening dress—black, draped over red, and touched with coral—made no obvious headway.

Harry had appreciated that dress; he had asked for a coral bead to have set as a scarf-pin. But Harry did not come so often, now. When he did, she took pains that Myrton should not be troubled by the circumstance. As Tessa said, he was not well enough to be allowed any annoyance which he could be spared. No doubt he had enough with the nurses, upon whose scientific, if unattractive, ministrations the doctor had peremptorily thrown him after the episode of the Alpha Theta play. Tessa felt that the physician despised her since that unlucky occasion; she never liked anybody who did not admire her, and an active repugnance to the old doctor replaced her first startled surprise at the polite contempt of his recent attitude towards herself. Tessa found it hard to understand how any male mind could weigh and judge instead of adoring her. She proceeded to confide her symptoms, when she had any, which was not often, for

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she was as healthy as a warm and well-fed kitten, in long letters to her cousin, Dr. Pierpont. Once when she had a cold, she sent for him to come on from New York.

In the days of the Most Holy Catholic Inquisition, one form of torture was found to succeed when every other failed. This was the infliction of enforced sleeplessness. A few nights and days of this religious amusement brought the most obstinate heretic to abject terms.

Myrton Ferris could not sleep. The occasional had become the continual fact. Night upon starling night he lay in his study bedroom and heard the college clock call every hour. In proportion as his power of motion increased—as it had to a limited extent—his power of rest eluded him. He could now sit in the stout easy-chair a certain portion of each day; but he would have given his chance, whatever it was, of regaining physical liberty for five nights' sleep. We make no exaggeration in saying this, such was his rack. Read he could not, nor write; conversation was much of the time impossible; yet the amazing—sometimes it seemed to him the cruel—thing was that his mind remained unclouded; it blazed like the African sun on the great desert; it knew neither rains nor dews; it burned his brain to ashes, from which another sprang, to be consumed again. Thought, feeling, imagination, assumed tremendous activ-

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ities. Without De Quincey's opiate, he knew De Quincey's dreams. Emotion flogged him to emotion. He flew from effort to effort of the unappeasable mind. Poems that he might not read taunted his memory. Great pictures, foreign architecture, noble scenery, forgotten music, strong plays—the treasures of his free and thoughtful life—provoked his recollection as a man torments a dog by flicking him with something that he cannot reach. It seemed to him that if he could smite pen on paper he could write the greatest thing that the world had missed—The Book of Denial. Then, like the radiometer, his mind would drop out of the waltz, swinging petulantly from the large to the trivial. He plodded over examination papers to save stupid boys from being put back a year. For classes that he might never meet again he constructed lectures that he could never deliver. Certain personal troubles, too, which he was able to master by day, scorned him for their slave at night. He thought of two things—his college and his wife.

His growing deviation from Tessa perplexed as much as it distressed him. To hold her he would have died; or lived when he wished to die. He did not hold her. Had he ever done so? Had she ever done any more than alight upon his quivering love? In fact, was Tessa's folly to be taken seriously, like that of a different woman? Was it more substantial than the glittering dust upon the wings of a tropical butterfly? Sometimes he could

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have humbled himself pitiably before her—he had loved her so—he longed so desolately for her tenderness. But something held him back. Tessa assumed her martyred air. She wore the expression of a profoundly injured wife. She wished to make Myrton feel that he was the one to be forgiven; at times she succeeded in doing so.

To the incident of the Alpha Theta evening he had never alluded; he might as well have thrown himself back into a quicksand out of which he had been dragged. Tessa was not stupid. He believed that she had understood him, once for all. As for the boy, a few simple and serious words had sufficed:

“Sheffield, you are cutting too many recitations, and dodging study hours. You will be suspended if you don’t look out. Don’t hang around here quite so much. Go back to your work.”

Harry had said, “Thank you, sir,” and that was the end of it.

If the lad’s straight eye wavered before his professor’s it was to be expected. The official rebuke was enough to account for that.

The winter hardened like a woman’s heart when she has ceased to love, or thinks she has. The heads of the hills were bare white, as if they had aged suddenly and had become old-men mountains, weary of life. Beyond the president’s mansion a gleam of the river flashed into range of the window where the cosmos grew. Ferris watched the skaters darting from shore to shore. Some-

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times he could identify Tessa's little figure in its scarlet skating-coat, swaying hand in hand with some student, tall above her. The elms whose arching arms clasped the beautiful streets of Routledge stood in chain armor from head to foot. On days when the radiometer was dancing, it was impossible to look at the elms; they blazed and blinded; when the radiometer sulked, and there fell a dark thaw, the ice dropped from the twigs and rolled up piles of spilled moonstones upon the slippery, uncleared sidewalks. The snow was deep, and had frozen to its heart. On the coldest nights, when the wind drove without mercy from the hills, the ice cracked about the study wing like a glacier; the reports were as loud as pistol-shots, and succeeded one another at incalculable intervals. The old house trembled and the bed vibrated in the grasp of the northwester. Jerked by the ice cannonade from the dream down whose blessed gulf he was struggling to sink, the man would wince and wake.

Ferris had fallen upon a fate, fortunately by no means general among sleepless persons—he had become a trespasser upon the world of sound. The great, human, healthy, noisy earth cast him out as an alien. In it he had no place, and of it he no longer was. It used to seem to him that he had more kinship with such lower races as slept with the dawn and waked with the dark than with beings of his own kind. A shout, a song, a piano, a cough, a footfall, branded his burning brain. He



HE COULD IDENTIFY TESSA'S LITTLE FIGURE IN ITS SCARLET
SKATING-COAT

UNION

THE LITTLE FIGURE IN ITS SCARLET SKATING-COAT

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became sensitive to inexorable trifles—a mouse in the wainscot, the stir of a blind, the throb of a window, the latching of a door.

The usual stir of well and thoughtless family life grew intolerable, and he found himself unable to explain why to the satisfaction of any person who could sleep. Certain words from the creed of a faith which his sufferings had submerged within him used to spring in the night to his parched lips. "He descended into hell," they said.

Now all this Tessa could not, or would not, or did not understand—no, nor a pang of it. Tessa had the unreasoning optimism of the slight nature. She treated Myrton to cheerful theories which she had evolved from her quite comfortable consciousness. She made a cushion of her excellent health and sat upon it in judgment of his affliction. *Her* nerves were under praiseworthy control—why not his? *She* went to bed to go to sleep, and slept when she got to bed. Why did not Myrton do the same? If Myrton were disturbed by the piano, was that the fault of the piano?

Tessa entertained as she had always done, freely, and at all hours. She complained that she could not live in a hospital. She urged that she must have relief from the strain of her unfortunate position. The care of an invalid husband was very depressing. This was Tessa's favorite word. She turned her neck slowly when she used it, and brought her lips together with the satisfaction of a woman who has advanced an argument of masculine force.

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It had seemed a trifling matter that Mrs. Ferris had quarrelled with her husband's physician, but a pettier circumstance than this may wreck a life. Ferris was deprived of the mediation of the doctor's influence—often the only protection left to the neglected or misunderstood sick. At first, he used to say sometimes:

"Teasie, would you mind not doing so-and-so?"

Or, "Teasie dear, if you could make it possible to do this or that?"

But Teasie would put up her under lip and sweetly say:

"You know, Myrton, I shall do whatever is *really* for the best. A sick person cannot be the judge."

Before the winter was over Tessa had persuaded herself that it was her duty to do for Myrton, not what he needed or wished, but what she thought fit. In her small, soft personality the infinite science of neglect was carried to a complicated art.

By spring, Ferris had almost ceased to ask the commonest kindness from his wife.

The cannonade of the ice died from outside the study windows; the chain armor dripped from the elms; the moonstones crunched beneath the feet or sank into the softened paths; yet the old-men mountains retained the white upon their heads; dingy drifts slunk into corners of yards and under fences; winter melted like a bad humor, and was not.

The windows of the study were flung wide; the

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sun swung high; and the radiometer waltzed every day upon the sill. Only the heart of the woman did not melt. Tessa had convinced herself that Myrton could get well, if he would. She treated him accordingly.

One day in early May he had asked to have both windows open, and he was sitting in the warm wind, quietly and alone.

The radiometer was spinning madly—he had grown fond of the delicate toy, and liked to watch it. Under the window the long, green plumes of the late cosmos had ventured a little way from the roots; the professor tried one day to lean over and see them, but the tyrant in his hurt back forbade him. Many flowers that he could not see were budding. The air was as full of their immature perfume as the heart of an untried intimacy.

Between the leaf-lace of the unfolding elms the river gleamed beyond the president's house. The canoes of the students floated around the bend in the stream, and under the bridge where the current was strong.

A boy came whistling down the street, and the invalid idly followed his motions. The lad had the leisurely step of his class, and it was some moments before the professor identified him as a messenger from the telegraph office in the village.

When the door-bell struck, and Ann came in with the yellow envelope, Ferris stretched out his unoccupied hand with the indifference of a man accustomed to large mails and a free use of the wires.

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"It's for Mrs. Ferris," explained Ann. "She's out canoeing, or I wouldn't be botherin' the likes of you."

"It may need an answer," said the professor. "Keep the messenger, Ann. I'll read it and see—and please sign for me."

Ann ran, and Ferris read the telegram:

"Mother is seriously sick with pneumonia. Will keep you informed by wire how the case progresses.

"HONORIA."

He read the telegram over several times, dwelling on the unexpected disproportionately as the sick do.

When Tessa came home in her short canoeing dress, with her brilliant cheeks, he held the message out to her.

"Your mother is ill," he hastened to say, kindly. "I suspect she is very ill. You were not in, so I opened the telegram. . . . I hope it will not prove as serious as it appears."

"Oh," said Tessa, without any pretence of emotion, "Mother is pretty old. You never can tell."

"Who the deuce *is* Honoria?" asked Ferris.

"I don't wonder you ask," retorted Tessa. "You haven't seen enough of my relatives to know them if you met them out skating. Honoria is—"

"Oh, I remember now," interrupted Ferris. "It must be your sister—I remember I saw her at our wedding. I had forgotten her name was Honoria, though. I don't believe it was—was it?"

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"Honor is the daughter of my step-mother," replied Tessa, coldly. "They call her Honor at home."

"Oh, that accounts for it," pleaded Ferris. "I do remember hearing somebody call a tall girl Honor. I beg her pardon—and yours, Teasie. You see, Teasie, there was only one girl in the world for me, that day. All the others looked alike. They were Gibson girls in illustrated papers. And I haven't—have I?—seen her since. She has never visited us, has she, Teasie?"

"No," said Tessa, "she never has. I asked her two or three times, but she could not come. You know Honor has a fad. She's a nice girl—I always liked Honor—we always get on. But she has this fad. She was away for three years."

"Oh yes," mused Myrton; "I remember now. I had forgotten. You never spoke of it, and we never saw her."

"Nobody has seen anything of Honor. She goes off on some outlandish duty to some heathenish place. Mother must have sent for her. Mother isn't at all hypochondriac. I think she must be *really* sick."

Myrton's face paled under the lash of Tessa's words and manner; but he only said, "Do you want to go on, Teasie?"

"I don't want to," admitted Tessa. "The regatta comes off next week. But I may have to."

"If you think it would be of any comfort to her—" urged Ferris. "But I suppose her daughter must know."

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"That's just it," argued Tessa. "Honor doesn't say a word about it. She doesn't tell me to come on. She doesn't suggest it at all. I take it for granted that she knows her business. She's been at it long enough."

But two hours later Tessa came back, dimpling.

"There's a letter from Dick Pierpont," she said, smiling excitedly. "He is treating the case. He thinks I had better come on."

"Very well," assented Ferris, after an imperceptible pause. "Hand me my check-book, Tessa. You will go to-morrow, I suppose?"

"I shall start to-night," said Tessa, decidedly. "I have sent for Miss Docer to come back. You will be perfectly safe with Miss Docer. You might have Jane if you want to. It would be a nice time for her to come while I am away. She's been so crazy to see you—but Jane wears on me. Dick says he will meet me. I shall go by the midnight express. I think I need a change."

"Oh, very well," repeated Ferris. "You will take some message from me, won't you? to your mother? I am sorrier for anybody who is sick than I used to be. And I should judge this to be a serious case. Teasie? Oh, Teasie! You won't forget to come and say good-bye to me? I know it will be rather late. I thought perhaps you might not want to disturb me. But I sha'n't sleep, you know, till the house is still. I had rather see you—just at the last."

"Oh, I'll remember," said Tessa.

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Between ten and eleven she rustled in and kissed him good-bye. She was in her dark travelling-dress, and close, small hat. She said that Harry would see her off at the train, and she had telegraphed Dick that she would take the express. Her red lips brushed her husband's, and she said that Miss Docer's cot was made up in the little room off the hall.

The carriage door shut hard as Tessa drove away. A boy's laugh trolled back, and the wheels of the cab labored off in the spring mud.

Miss Docer came into the study and asked what there was that she could do.

Tessa stayed in New York three weeks. She wrote her husband dutifully. She wrote that her mother was better; then that she was worse; then the telegraph carried the news of Mrs. Drayton's death. Tessa did not return after the funeral, as Ferris had expected; she said that business had come up which kept her, and that Dick thought it would be well for her to remain long enough to see the estate properly divided. Besides, she had got all tangled up with dressmakers, and could not get away. Tessa observed that she did not mean to go into mourning; Honoria's would do for the family. She suggested that Myrton would not need her, since Jane was there, and sent her love to Jane with the good-nature that we feel towards one who is relieving us of an irksome duty.

To a certain extent, as Myrton was driven to confess to himself, Tessa spoke the pitiful truth.

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Jane was an old-fashioned, brooding woman, and had the qualities of her type; sometimes she tired him, but she never forgot him. She fussed a little, but she loved much. The neglected man rested for a time in her familiar femininity, as a boy rests in his mother's home after a stormy passion; to which, in time, he knows that he must return. At first he could not deny that he did not miss Tessa as much as he expected. But the inexorable rhythm of motion in a vital human love swung him back. He had begun to miss his wife savagely, he had begun to clamor for her with the call of a wounded and famished thing, when she came home.

Jane went one day, and Tessa came the next. She came in the morning, and the cool light of full day held her up as if she had been a picture unsparingly hung. Tessa was looking remarkably well. She had gained in color, contour, and good spirits. She seemed excited and happy. She kissed her husband kindly enough, and generously chatted with him for half an hour. It seemed to Myrton that absence had carved new lines about Tessa's mouth. No doubt the sad scenes through which she had been compelled to pass had—but no; they had not softened Tessa. Her face had hardened perceptibly; it seemed to glitter on her husband when she smiled.

Then Trip bounced in, and flung himself, a little wave of love, upon her. When Trip cried: "Mommer! I've got a mud-bakery in the go-rash. I can make squince preserves"; or: "Mommer!

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Aunt Jane isn't pretty the way you are. She's too long. I like 'em short like you, Mommer!" Tessa grew Madonna in a minute. She kissed the child rapturously, and fondled him before his father's hungry eyes. Ferris would have given a year of his life for one of those real kisses.

"She was wife. She is mother," he thought. "There was only so much of her. There is only so much left for me, now. She never will retrace herself."

Tessa chatted pleasantly. She told him all about the funeral, the property, the family plans, Dr. Pierpont, and Honoria.

"I have asked Honoria to come here," she observed, after a perceptible pause. "I have invited her to come and stay with us."

"Oh, have you?" asked Ferris. He did not add a word. He could not think of anything to say which would not seem to put him in a wrong position. Tessa would be quite justified in thinking him inhospitable. He forced his mind to dwell upon the fact that the sister of his wife was a freshly bereaved girl, suddenly homeless.

"By all means," he said, heartily. "Do whatever pleases you, Tessa. I shall be very glad—"

His honest soul answered the words upon his lips. He was not glad. He thought of the advent of an unknown member of the family with a heaviness of heart which only the sick can understand. Honoria was younger than Tessa; she presented herself to him in the usual perspective of feminine

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youth. He saw her flirting with the students, as city girls—as all girls—do in college towns. She would laugh a good deal, like Tessa, and undoubtedly she would play the piano. Tessa would feel that she must entertain her. Callers would be more and merrier. Their hours would be late and later. He was sorry for Honoria's affliction—if she were afflicted. But he wished that his wife had consulted him before inviting this alien creature to make a permanent home with them. It even occurred to him that it would have been pretty in Tessa had she done so. Suddenly he perceived that Tessa's high voice was soaring above his silence.

"She said she couldn't come, just yet. She had made some ridiculous promise to the Floating Hospital for the summer. I told her we had the hospital atmosphere here, and plenty of it, if that was what she wanted."

"Oh, did you?" said Myrton, patiently. "It must have been an inducement—put in just that way—to the young lady to come."

"Well, anyhow, she's coming," replied Tessa, shortly. "I think she will be quite useful, take it all around. It will leave me a good deal freer. Dr. Pierpont thought it would be an excellent arrangement."

Ferris made no reply, and Tessa went to take off her things. Trip thumped after her, slamming every door. His father could hear him shrilling down the two long halls:

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"Mommer! Doctor says — Mommer! — Papa's got to have a rub-e-o-path. A rub-e-o-path! A rub-e-o—rub-e-o—rub-e-o—"

Trip's roar trickled away. Tessa came back presently. It struck Ferris that she made more than a usual effort to do her duty by him. She obviously tried to entertain him. She did not ask him how he was. If she had once said, "Dear, do you suffer just as much?" or, "Did it make it hard for you in any way because I went?" But Tessa did nothing of the kind. Tessa never asked sick people how they were. She had a theory that sympathy was not good for them. This is a comfortable theory for the well; and so she had by experience found it. She chatted with a certain ceremonious gayety; as if the powerful, sombre, crippled figure on the couch-bed had been newly presented to her at a college reception.

"When is your sister coming?" asked Ferris.

"Oh, not at present," returned Tessa, carelessly.

When Harry Sheffield called, which he did promptly that evening, she said that she did not believe in talking things over with sick persons. Tessa urged that they could not get the point of view.

One afternoon in the first week of June Tessa came to the study alcove in her boating-dress. Ferris and Philos were sitting alone together. All the windows were open, and summer was soft in the room.

"I'm going canoeing," she began, without pre-

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lude. "I may not get back till towards dinner-time. Ann is where she can hear the bell."

"Whom are you going with?" asked Ferris.

"I'm going with Harry. There aren't any objections to *that*, I suppose? I haven't been on the river with Harry for an age. I've given up everything to that nonsense you got into your head."

"It did not originate in my head," replied Ferris, gravely. "It had to be driven there by outsiders."

"It was that meddling old president," retorted Tessa. "He has the low ideas of a man who has travelled too much. He has seen so much corrupt society. He doesn't understand the code of a simple country college life. He is a man of the world. We are children of nature. Anyhow, I'm going canoeing. I'll be back by half-past five."

Ferris said nothing; Tessa took pains to give him no opportunity. As she hurried out of the room, he got up from his chair with the slow, painful movement now possible to him, and made as if he would overtake her; but sank back, muffling the groan upon his bitter lips. He thought of the dogma, old as life and as unfair, that supremacy resolves itself into a question of physical force. He reflected savagely that he was no longer master of his own house; his wife, his child, defied him; he was a crippled, disregarded thing, pierced by a hundred arrows as many times a day—humiliated—harassed as only a small, feminine nature can harass a superior and sensitive man.

The spaniel, who knew, as spaniels do, when his

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master was sad, crept from lap to neck and began to whine, kissing and clinging.

"Philos," said the sick man, brokenly, "you are all I have now in this world."

The afternoon descended. Gold fire and green fire faded, and the vivid face of the June day covered itself. Tessa did not come. It dimmed to dusk, but she had not returned. Ferris, whose wholesome heart could not remain sad or bitter long (he always found it easier to love his wife than to blame her), had begun to think of her with a tender longing—in fact, not without a touch of anxiety. He had watched for her till it was no longer possible to see her when she came. Ann had closed the blinds and lighted the shaded lamp in the study on the empty desk. Trip had thumped in and had taken Philos away to bake gingerbread in the go-rash. Ferris, tired out by looking and listening for Tessa, had crawled to the outside of the bed, and was lying in the soft middle tint, half gloom, half glow, when he heard wheels and the opening of the front door. . . . *Tessa!* Had anything happened to Tessa? His heart gave three or four long, slow, sinister throbs, as the hearts of the physically weakened do; then bounded and ran away with him.

Ann was standing beside his couch, holding out a card.

"It's too dark in here for me to read it," he panted. "Who is it, Ann?"

Walled In

"It's Mrs. Ferris's sister, sir, I'm thinking," said Ann, "that she was expecting. She give orders to make up the pink guest-room to-day—but she ain't got back at all, sir. The young lady told me to tell you she was here, but not to be obliged to see her unless you felt able."

"Oh, show her in," said the professor, patiently. As Ann went, the stranger came into the study. She hesitated a moment beyond the large green curtain, just out of reach of the invalid's eyes. He heard a quick step doubt and pause.

"Won't you come in?" he suggested. "I am sorry Tessa isn't here. I expect her every minute. If you don't mind—please come in."

"Why, of course!" replied the unseen, heartily.

Ferris, who was sensitive to voices, experienced a definite pleasure in the hearing of these three ordinary words.

The visitor stirred and stood uncertainly in the broad space between the dark alcove and the bright study, swaying slightly in the middle tone that was neither gloom nor glow. All the light there was in the alcove, and this was not much, sought the face of the crippled man, blurred by his dark beard, and defined by his brilliant eyes. The young lady, in her black dress, stood with her back to the study lamp; he could not see a feature of her. She took a step forward and held out her hand.

"Don't give me a thought," she said, comfortably. "I shall make myself quite at home until Tessa comes."

Walled In

Her voice was low—remarkably so for a modern girl; it had a winning delicacy, and a certain vibrant quality hard to describe; it lingered on the ear like a musical note that is truly struck. Ferris laughed as he shook hands.

“Are you all voice?” he asked.

“*Et preterea nihil*,” said the young lady, quickly.

“You see my limitations,” Ferris forlornly urged. “What can I do for you? I have a bell. I am still blessed with power to ring it. And Ann—”

“Ann and I are already intimate friends,” replied Honoria. “If you trouble yourself I shall be sorry I came.”

“Aren’t you going to sit down?”

Ferris waved a wasted hand towards the portly chair. But his visitor shook her head.

“To-morrow, perhaps. You don’t receive evening callers, Tessa told me—and you ought not to. It is early yet; I thought you would not care if I ran in a minute. Your pillows are not at all right,” she added, rather timidly. “Would you mind if I improved that a little?” With a few skilled touches she swept out of the pillows all the distortion and discomfort that masculine invention had thumped into them while he was wretchedly watching for Tessa. Before he could thank her she had quietly left the room.

Honoria was eating her dinner alone when Ann pushed into the dining-room with a scared face.

Walled In

"Would you come here, Miss Tryde? This way—to the back piazza. Mrs. Ferris—"

Miss Tryde pushed back her chair with the leisurely movement of one who was familiar with Mrs. Ferris's possibilities, and followed Ann to the piazza. A carriage was driving softly out of the back yard. Tessa, pale and shivering, stood on the porch. She flung herself into her sister's arms, and, with a genuine sob, put up her mouth to be kissed.

"You are wet!" cried Honoria; "you are dripping wet!"

"'Sh! 'Sh! Don't let Myrton know—Myrton mustn't *ever* know. I'll get into something dry and go right in to see him. Hurry and help me, there's a dear! Harry and I were out canoeing—we tried to change seats—and we capsized."

"Who is Harry?" asked Honoria. She peeled off the drenched clothes from Tessa's half-drowned little body with an unemotional, experienced hand. "Who in the world is Harry? Is he another doctor? Or a new cousin?"

VII



OME years, ago when the art of the modern camera was young, an important training-school made an experiment with a composite photograph of its nurses. The result was famous and beautiful. A sweet, sacrificial face, thoughtful and calm, wearing its white cap like a crown, and its mission like the purple, looked out dreamily from the mystery of a score of blended woman souls. As the individual had perished in the type, self had gone out in dedication. The composite countenance gave the remarkable impression of a being at once aloof from life, and yet plunged into the depths of it. No person who had ever seen the photograph would be likely to forget it.

On the morning after the arrival of her sister, Tessa promptly suggested to Myrton that he should see Honoria.

"It was so unfortunate, my being delayed last night (I didn't think to tell you there was a canoe went over, and Harry and I waited to see if any harm came of it), and you're never able to talk

Walled In

evenings. Between us she had no sort of a reception. I think she would like to come in and sit with you awhile."

"Did she say so?" asked the professor, reluctantly.

"Well—no. I can't say that she *said* so. But I thought—"

"Oh, it is *your* say so, is it, Teasie? Very well, Teasie. Do as you please. Bring her in if you insist upon it."

"She'd be likely to come if she heard that!" flashed Tessa. "For sheer inhospitality—as I have always said—you men who live in your studies—and when it comes to being a nervous invalid on top of that—" Tessa's were the disjointed sentences which a vague habit of mind creates; her husband had long since resigned his unfortunately trained taste to his wife's immaturity of speech, but it struck him that morning that this was more obvious than usual. She was a little pale, too.

"Anything wrong, Teasie?" he asked, with the quick kindness that had never failed her in ten years of married life. "Anything happened?"

"No," said Tessa. "Nothing has happened. Don't, for mercy's sake, get to worrying about *me*. I only thought Honoria—"

"I shall be glad to see your sister," replied Ferris, without enthusiasm. "Pray send her in. I haven't seen her, I admit," he added. "It was pretty dark here last evening. And she was so thoughtful as not to stay. She flitted in and out like a—bat."

Walled In

"Good gracious, Myrton!" expostulated Tessa. "I'd better bring her right away before you perpetrate anything worse. A bat! *Honorio!* If you'd hit on a woodpecker or an English sparrow—but bats!"

"Bring her in and I'll ask her pardon," groaned Myrton. "Only let's have it over with."

"She brought you these." Tessa contritely produced from behind her straight back a hidden handful of wild white violets, half dead. "I forgot to send them in last night. And I didn't give them water enough. She's heard me say how you go on about flowers."

"I didn't know I *went on* about anything," deprecated the professor, mildly.

"There!" cried Tessa. "If they only will exert themselves, and not act as if they had been condemned to be hung by the neck until they are dead—poke that long slimsy one up, won't you? I'll call her in."

"Probably they are hypochondriac," suggested Ferris, with what Tessa called his "unresigned" expression. "If they had more reserve force and strength of character, Teasie, they would sit up straight like other flowers."

His face was still cold with its bright bitterness when he turned it to greet the sister of his wife. Honorio came in as she had gone out the evening before, so quietly that the invalid experienced, despite himself, a certain gratification in her movements; it struck him that these were strongly re-

Walled In

pressed, like those of a person who has long considered the effect upon others of everything that she did. She was smiling when Tessa gave a little jerk to the green portière to let her pass, and it occurred to him also that she had been accustomed to assume a cheerful manner when she entered a sick-room; but as soon as she saw him in the bald morning light, her smile went out like a soft candle in a gust.

Unmistakably shocked and saddened, she allowed herself one honest glance at the sick man; this suggested such consciousness of what he had suffered as he had ceased to suppose that the well world held for him anywhere.

She did not speak for a moment, but held out her hand, and by the time he had taken it she was smiling again. This time he thought it a quite natural smile, and rather a sweet one.

Sweet was not at all the adjective which he was inclined at first to apply to Honoria. Her face was compact and reserved—more so than is usual with women of her still young years; she could not have been much, if anything, over thirty; closely below her smile, which did not sink in, so to speak, lay the molded gravity which is inseparable from strength.

Her black dress, with its touch of hemstitched muslin at throat and wrists, gave a certain austerity, like that of a habit, to her appearance. She looked more like a New England girl than a New-Yorker, while yet she had the indefinable quality of the metropolis.

Walled In

The professor would have found it impossible to select the color of her eyes, but he noticed that her mouth was generous, and that her coloring was pale and lambent; she had the complexion that seems to be lighted from within, rather than from without. She was not—no, she was not in the least like Tessa. After all, why should she be? They were not (now that he thought of it) of the same blood. He experienced a certain relief in the fact. Tessa's characteristics were of the sort which must be adorable to a man who loved her, but might be intolerable in a woman to whom he was indifferent.

"Myrton says you bumped in and out last evening like a bat," began Tessa, promptly; she sat down on the silk counterpane at the foot of her husband's couch, and indicated to Honoria that she was to take "the fat chair." This was occupied by Philos, who relinquished it jealously.

"Did I say bumped, Tessa?" asked Ferris, with the patience which his wife and his affliction (it had taken the combination) had lashed into a naturally impatient man. "I *did* say bat," he admitted, dolefully. "You will remember, Miss Honoria, that I had not seen you."

"Now you have seen her," persisted Tessa, with the childish pleasure that she sometimes took in embarrassing people, "what should you say? Come! What is Honoria like?"

The invalid's eyes rested tenderly upon his wife. "She is not a bit like you, Teasie."

Walled In

"Oh, I mean," pouted Tessa, "something in the line of birds, for instance. You're up in natural history. What's the advantage of knowing everything if you can't classify a new person?"

"It might involve a new branch of study," replied Ferris, genially arousing himself, as Tessa had meant that he should. "But at a venture, Teasie, I will suggest that your sister comes in and out of a sick-room like a dove; or a homing-pigeon. Will that do any better?"

"You are not looking at Honoria," complained Tessa. "Only at me. How can you say what she is like when you are looking at me?"

"I am always looking only at you," replied Ferris, gently.

"There!" said Tessa. "You see. I told you what a goose he is."

She turned her slow neck archly towards Honoria. Tessa was not loath to exhibit Myrton's devotion before her unmarried sister; Tessa would flirt even with her own husband when it was worth her while. But Tessa, as Myrton had thought, was remote from herself that morning. She was uncontrollably restless, and babbled fretfully like an ailing child. Philos, with a malevolent glance at the stranger, came over and sat down on the hem of Mrs. Ferris's dress.

"I don't like to take your place," Honoria said, addressing the spaniel in a conversational tone.

"You couldn't," Tessa jerked out. "Nobody

Walled In

could. That dog is of more consequence to Myrton than anybody in this world."

Somewhat abruptly she excused herself on the ground that she had errands to do down-town, and that Honoria had offered to read aloud or to make herself entertaining. The dog, with another bitter look at the visitor, sullenly turned to his mistress.

"Shall I take him?" asked Tessa, stopping short. "He doesn't get any exercise or fun out of life, moping here with you."

Myrton, wincing perceptibly at his wife's words, assented.

"If you are not going too far. And, Tessa, you will take very good care of him, won't you?"

"He's old enough to take care of himself," said Tessa, carelessly. She rustled out of the room, Philos ostentatiously followed her, and the two in the study alcove were left together.

Honoria appeared not to notice the circumstance in the least. She had no more self-consciousness than Miss Binder, Miss Docer, or the family doctor. For a few minutes her remarkable ease was not agreeable to the professor; it struck him as not quite natural; perhaps he was inclined to use a stronger adjective. But he soon adjusted himself, and began to talk with her—dutifully, at first.

"How did you happen, I wonder, to think white violets of me?"

He lifted one of the drooping flowers that Tessa had poked anyhow, head down, foot up, into the glass vase upon his table.

Walled In

"I can't say that I thought them of you," replied Honoria. "I thought them for you. We were delayed at the Junction an hour, and I got out and ran about the fields. There was a brook, and a swamp. You know white violets are very thirsty."

"Yes, I know."

The professor turned his head sharply as if his pillow were stuffed with flat-irons. "I picked some at the Junction myself one day. It was only a year ago. I was on my wheel; I had ridden twelve miles." He did not add that he had picked the violets for Tessa, and that she had forgotten to water those, too. "Still, I don't see how you happened to think wild flowers—no matter which preposition you use—in my behalf. Most persons suppose they must be ordered from a greenhouse. And some"—he hesitated—"never think flowers at all."

The first week after his accident, Tessa had brought him roses. Since then—and he had been crippled over seven months—she had not once remembered to send him any flowers. He had pressed one of the roses in a book, like a boy.

"I have seen so often how much people that are shut out care for them," Honoria hastened to say. "And wild flowers most of all. I think it is because, as you say, so few persons think wild flowers. In fact, few well persons think anything that the sick do. I don't know that it is to be wondered at. They have not been trained to. Their im-

Walled In

aginations have not been educated. And without imagination—”

“Without imagination, what?”

“Oh, anything or nothing. It seems to account for everything, don’t you think? whether there is imagination enough to go round in a given case. But it doesn’t matter so much to well people. Everything matters more to the sick.”

“What taught you that?” asked Ferris, with rising interest in a conversation that he had begun from a sense of duty unadorned. “Your imagination?”

“I can’t imagine whether I have one,” answered Honoria. “It’s experience in my case, Professor.”

Ferris, who naturally liked the little dignities and reserves of life, was relieved that the girl did not call him Myrton offhand, and yet uncomfortably doubtful whether he ought to ask her to take that liberty. He compromised with his uncertainty by saying suddenly:

“I am ashamed to admit that I am rather at sea about Tessa’s family. Unfortunately, we have seen so little of any of them, and I am deplorably ignorant of the duties or privileges of a brother-in-law. But if you are Tessa’s sister—”

“I am not Tessa’s sister,” returned Honoria, quickly. “We have always played that I am, that’s all—and we always shall. Of course you know that I am the daughter of the second wife of Tessa’s father. Considered as a sister-in-law, I am not an oppressive fact.”

Walled In

"You were how old—I have forgotten—when Colonel Drayton married Mrs. Tryde?"

"Four. And Tessa was nine. We grew up together. We used to be fond of each other. We have always been on the best of terms. It was one of those tangled families where we might have been very unhappy. But we never were. I think I was rather a jolly little girl; I didn't mope much. Every one was good to me."

"I interrupted you," observed Ferris. "You were going to tell me about your experience."

"Was I?"

"If you please."

"Which one?"

"Why, the one that taught you to think white violets for a crippled man."

"Oh, *that*? It was very simple. I studied the subject. I am a graduate nurse, you know."

"Please tell me precisely what you mean by that. Of course I have heard the circumstance mentioned. But I can't say that it ever conveyed any such definite idea to me as I wish it had. You don't mean a trained nurse, do you?" He remembered Miss Binder and Miss Docer. A quick, incredulous smile twitched the corners of his mustache. So far as he had ever thought of Miss Tryde at all, he had taken Tessa's word for it that Honoria had a fad; he supposed she had gone prattling into some career as the girl of the day does, to dignify the humiliation of the interval between school and marriage. He would have

Walled In

pictured her with a lace apron and a Mary Stuart cap, like Tessa, amusing herself to pass an empty hour or a vacant year, playing with the sacred emergency of the sick—some fair, unfit creature who had deviated from her type, but must, by all the natural forces, swing back to it.

"Why, of course," replied Honoria, rather curtly. "What else should I mean? I went through the usual drill. That takes three years, you know, before one gets the diploma."

"And after that?"

"After that I did surgical work. I went wherever I was sent. I had a pretty cold winter up in the north of the State, this year; these country hospitals need better service than they get—so I went. But I am just a little tired since Mother died. I thought I would rest awhile this spring before I go at it again."

"*Are* you going at it again? I thought Tessa said— We hoped you would make your home with us," urged Ferris, with genuine cordiality.

"I am promised to serve on the Floating Hospital in Boston for July and August," answered Honoria. It seemed to Ferris that she spoke with unnecessary decision.

"I shall be sorry," he said, heartily.

"Shall you? But you didn't want me to come. You dreaded my coming."

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, how do I know anything? You could not feel otherwise—in a case like yours. Don't try to

Walled In

explain or apologize. I don't mind in the least. I understand it. I can't *help* understanding."

"Really," began Ferris, eagerly, "I shall be sorry—I am already so. I won't deny how I felt about your coming beforehand. But now—"

"You are looking better this morning," interrupted Honoria, in what he perceived at once was her professional tone. "You slept more than you expected."

"More than I have since—this is Saturday—since last Sunday night. The house was quieter. It was quieter than it has been any night for a good while. That makes, unfortunately for me, a preposterous difference. The usual family movements cannot be controlled, of course—for one person."

"Why not?" asked Honoria, brusquely.

The invalid's large, lonely eyes opened widely like a child's.

"But that would require a great deal of trouble and interest in the patient. Somebody would have to care and think. Somebody must keep up caring and thinking."

"So I noticed," replied Honoria. "Last night I took the liberty—I made a few suggestions."

"*What!*"

"Did I do wrong? Tessa doesn't mind. She takes things from me very nicely; she always did."

"You did me an incalculable kindness," said the professor, very slowly. "How can I call it right or wrong? If you knew how much a night's sleep

Walled In

—even one night—means to me, you would see that I am in no position to criticise you, no matter what you do. I can only wonder how you came to do it.”

“There is no reason,” remarked Honoria, “why Trip should *never* walk, but *always* thump. Nor is it necessary that he should ride down the balusters and jump off with a whack every time. My imagination that you talk about has soared to the height of supposing that his lungs do not require all the exercise they get. I have seen children who were not allowed to bellow like—like—”

“Pray don’t pause for a simile on my account. You can’t hurt a father’s tender feelings when it comes to Trip’s vocal capacities. That boy will invent a new college yell if he lives to grow up.”

“I have nursed in families where doors were shut, not slammed, when people were sick,” proceeded Honoria. “There are some other things—but I couldn’t get at much the first night. I knew you would be tired and excited. I was afraid you wouldn’t sleep at all. I did the best I could—it is not necessary that you should suffer as much as you do.”

“Isn’t it?” asked the sick man, piteously. “I have tried to look on it as inevitable.”

“There is enough that is inevitable. I should like to be at liberty to reduce the surplus—the unearned increment—just for the short time that I am here. It might help afterwards. You never can tell.”

Walled In

"How are you going to get the liberty?" asked Ferris.

"From you," said Honoria, looking him straight in the eyes.

"From me? I should have thought it would be Tessa."

"I am not in the least afraid of Tessa. If *you* won't feel that I am intruding; if you will not resent; if you won't ask any questions, but just give me my head—I am not without hope that I may be able to improve your condition a little before I go. It—it is not an easy one."

"You must be a kind woman," said Ferris, slowly.

"And you must be a brave man," returned Honoria.

At these simple words the sick man's eyes filled with strong and sudden tears; these did not fall; he brushed them with one of the dead white violets that he had been twisting in his hand.

"You must excuse me," he pleaded. "I am accustomed to thinking of myself as a coward. You took me off my guard."

"Shall I read to you awhile?" asked Honoria, in a matter-of-fact tone. She rose and examined the books on the alcove shelves while he regained himself.

"No, thank you; some other time. Miss Honoria?"

"Mr. Professor?"

Ferris regarded his visitor with puckered, scru-

Walled In

tinizing brows. "I am certain that I have seen you— Where have I seen you before?"

"Why, at the wedding, ten years ago."

"No—no. I don't mean that. I have seen your portrait. Have you ever been published anywhere? Are you sure you never slipped into an illustrated magazine in the course of your career? Or even a Sunday newspaper? Perhaps some reporter at one of your hospitals—"

"I am perfectly sure—never."

"I have it!" cried Ferris. "Now I know. Would you mind going to the lower left-hand drawer of my study table? There is a pile of old photographs— Yes—that one. Bring them to me, if you will be so good."

Honorina brought the photographs, and Ferris tossed them about with nervous, hurrying fingers.

"There!" He held up a copy of the composite nurse.

"Oh, I remember," said Honorina, with a pleased interest. "That was before my day—but I have seen it. That is the Mayhew composite; it is quite famous. The first class in the first training-school in the world sat for it—I mean, the first school in that kind of an institution."

She studied the photograph a moment and handed it back to him. "It is lovely," she said. She did not add, "That is too beautiful to be like me." She did not blush. She showed no more consciousness of the tribute than a boy. She seem-

Walled In

ed to Ferris to be more destitute of coquetry than any woman he had ever seen.

He examined the picture thoughtfully. Like Honoria's was the generous mouth; like hers the modest pose, the winning gravity; like her the indefinable, the ever-womanly; yes, and the obedience of the face to that inner law, that higher breeding, which sets a soul apart from the vulgarity of selfishness.

"Do not misunderstand me," he said. "Of course there is as much difference as resemblance. You are, so definitely, a lady; while this—"

"Is something so much grander than a lady," interrupted Honoria, hotly, "that I wonder at you!"

"But I am wondering at you," persisted the professor. "The wonder lies in the duality. This is a picture of a good, self-sacrificing woman. You can't help being the Portrait of a Lady—not if you tried. That is the extraordinary thing about the likeness. *You* are the composite—don't you see?"

Honoria shook her head; she was but half appeased. She put out her hand to return the photograph, but the professor had slipped it into the drawer of the light stand where the radiometer stood. The radiometer was whirling like a dervish.

"Who sent you that elfin toy?" asked Honoria, visibly anxious to change the subject. Ferris explained that it was one of his students, and dwelt for a moment, since she seemed to wish it, upon the natural history of Brander.

Walled In

"A boy who would think a radiometer must be different from the rest," suggested Honoria.

"So I found out—when it was too late," answered the professor, drearily. "Come!" he challenged her. "I can see so soon that you speak the truth. And I want it. I must have it. You know something about sickness and surgery—accidents and their consequences. When do *you* think I shall get to work again?"

Honoria walked over to the window, and stood looking out and down; her hands were clasped behind her back.

"What is that growing down there—with the long green feathers pushing from the roots? No buds on it yet."

"That is my cosmos," returned Ferris, with a disappointed look; he had not thought this girl would try to assuage him with silly evasions, as other people did. "I am fond of the cosmos. It blossoms in the fall. It was in blossom the day I was hurt."

"When the cosmos blossoms," said Honoria, gently, "I can answer your question, if you wish me to."

"But that will be September or October! The trustees— But you don't understand. I can't wait for the cosmos. I've got to know right away."

"I never lived among college people," admitted Honoria. "But I used to see the board at the hospital on their visiting days."

Walled In

"But you don't say," persisted Ferris, "what my chances are. Either nobody knows, or nobody will tell me."

"It is not my case," replied Honoria.

"I wish you were a doctor!" cried Ferris, impulsively.

"I should have been—I cared tremendously about that; more than I ever did about anything. I came by it honestly; my father was a physician, you know—very likely you *don't* know. But Colonel Drayton did not like women doctors, so we compromised on this; he thought it was more feminine, I suppose, being the abject thing. So I never can do anything—now—for the sick, but obey orders—the orders of some man. If they kill the patient, I can't help that; I must obey orders. I have had to do things that I knew were dangerous for my patient; sometimes I have seen him die when I knew he could be saved. Perhaps it's as bad as trustees. All wage-earners hate their employers, don't they?"

"You do not answer me," said Ferris, obstinately. "You are trying to divert my mind. I ask you when I am going to get well. Why don't you tell me?"

Honoria wheeled from the window by which she was still standing.

"Under your present conditions—you will not get well," she said, with more feeling than she had yet shown.

The invalid's pathetic face blanched.

Walled In

"I believe you are the first person who has told me the truth since my accident. . . . And yet you do not strike me as a pessimist. If you thought my recovery impossible—"

"If I thought your recovery impossible, I should not have told you anything at all," interrupted Honoria.

The passionate curiosity of the sick to investigate any new views of his own disorder, to test the most improbable of his chances, overcame Ferris.

"What *do* you think?" he asked, excitedly.

"I think if the case were mine I should change the conditions."

"Call the case yours!" he entreated. "Make it so. Take it. You have played sister to Tessa. Play doctor for me. Give me the result of your experience, your intuitions; it seems that you possess both. Advise me—please."

"Not this morning," replied Honoria, quietly. "You have talked too long, as it is."

"Very well." Ferris sank back into his pillows with his disappointed look.

"It seems to me time for him to be home," he said, suddenly. "They have been gone a good while. Would you mind going to see? Perhaps Philos did not go with her, after all; Trip may have shut him up somewhere."

Honoria obeyed, with her sweet readiness to please, but returned to the study in silence. She was disturbed by the expression of the professor's waiting, listening face.

Walled In

"Is it the dog, or the wife?" she thought.

She asked no questions, but quietly ordered his luncheon, and herself brought in his tray. Ferris could not eat. It came to be two o'clock—half past. Tessa did not come.

"You ought not to be obliged to suffer like this," said Honoria, impatiently. "It is unnecessary. Tessa does not think. She never did. She does not mean to hurt you so."

Then Tessa, sparkling, walked into the room. She was swinging her white lingerie hat by its rose-colored ribbons. Her muslin dress was sprigged with pink. She looked like a little college belle.

"Where is Philos?" asked Ferris, rising sharply.

Tessa stopped short. Her pretty, immature face rushed red from brow to dimple.

"Why, I—don't know."

"You don't *know*!"

"I've been to ride," complained Tessa. "He followed me. He seemed to enjoy it immensely. I took quite a ride—I went over to the Junction. I'm sure I thought he was close behind me all the way. I did not notice—I did not think—"

The crippled man lay staring at her. He had the humane eyes of the dog-lover, and out of them leaped the look which only a lover of dogs can understand. Tessa did not understand it, but she identified it; she had seen it before.

"If you have lost him—" panted Ferris. "If you have *lost* him— You knew he was all I had! . . . Get me my clothes!" he commanded, savagely.



A STRONG ARM CREPT BEHIND HIM AND STEADIED HIM



Walled In

"Let me get out of this—this hell, here. *I* can find him."

He staggered to his slippered feet and stood in his long brown dressing-gown, swaying. A strong arm crept behind him and steadied him so that he did not fall. He thought nothing about it then. Afterwards he remembered that it was not Tessa's.

Tessa was otherwise occupied. She sat down in the stout chair and cried aloud like a child who is about to be punished. She complained that Myrton was very profane, and that Philos was more trouble than he was worth. She argued that the dog would be sure to come back of his own accord, and if he didn't, what was he good for? She urged that she was tired out, that Myrton's condition was very depressing, and that she might better be a radiometer in a glass cage and done with; then nobody could get at her to blame her for everything that happened. Then Tessa, who was usually angry when she felt herself in the wrong, did one of the unbelievable things that a beautiful and delicately reared woman may be known to do. The Italian in her struck out like a stiletto, and she hurled upon her invalid husband a few words so heartless and so repulsive that a firm, soft hand suddenly closed her lips. Tessa would have recognized the touch in the dark or in a dream; she had felt it often years ago.

"Hush, Tessa!" said Honoria. "Stop talking, and listen to me."

VIII



THE difference between Tessa and Honoria was like that between weather and climate, and climate, as is to be expected of it, held the supremacy. All their lives Honoria had instinctively assumed, and Tessa had as instinctively accepted, a reversion of their natural attitudes. As if she had been the elder sister the girl now took command of the wife; and, as if she were the younger, Tessa deferred to the gentle but peremptory hand that drew her from the study and out of the sick man's hearing. The two sat down on the hard sofa in the front hall.

"Now, Tessa," said Honoria, "tell me all about it. Where did you ride? And whom did you ride with?"

Tessa hesitated only so long as it took to look once into Honoria's steady eyes.

"Why, Harry was so anxious about me after last evening. He was afraid the chill—and the shock—he wanted to know how I was. So I said I'd take a short ride. You see, he was going away, too; he's gone home for over Sunday; he thought he'd better. Some fools have been talking—there

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always *are* fools," added Tessa, with the air of an underestimated philosopher. "The fellows joked him a little. You see, it got out, of course, about the canoe upsetting."

"I see," said Honoria, without smiling.

"I hope nobody 'll be lunatic enough to tell Myrton," suggested Tessa. "It might worry him."

"Possibly it might," repeated Honoria. "Put your hat on, Tessa. We are going to find Philos."

"I am very tired," complained Tessa. "And the horse has gone back to the livery-stable."

"Then we can walk over to the stable," observed Honoria, pleasantly. Tessa's obstinate look began to stiffen her tear-wet face.

"Why can't you go yourself, if you are so concerned about the dog?"

"If I knew the country, do you suppose I would wait so long as it takes to reason with you, Tessa?" cried Honoria, hotly. "Come, Teasie! Be a good girl, and *try* to undo the harm you've done. Can't you possibly understand—"

"No," said Tessa, reluctantly tying on her rose-white, rose-pink hat. "I cannot possibly understand how people can make such a fuss about a dog. . . . I can't understand Myrton half the time, about half the things that happen, if that is what you mean. If you can, I'm glad you've come; it's a pity somebody shouldn't—he's such a poor, dismal, old dear. Go tell him, Honor, we'll hunt for the dog. Say I was a vicious little beast. I

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don't care what you tell him, so long as you don't tell him about Harry."

Honorio's lips opened impulsively, but they closed without a word. The sick man lay panting on his couch when he saw her standing suddenly beside it in her thin black dress. In every fibre of her he felt the solacing compassion which is wrought out of respect for the pain that it would assuage.

"I suppose you think—" he began; "I don't know what you think! You see, I have had Philos a good while, and he and I are . . . such chums. He never was lost before. Anything may happen to him. He is liable to die of heart-break; spaniels do. If I could only get out of this accursed room—I *know* I could find him."

"And so can I," said Honorio. "Tessa says I always could find things. You know, some people have that knack. We are going after Philos; we are going immediately. Do not concern yourself *quite* so much. Leave it to me."

"It seems that one can leave all sorts and conditions of things to you," replied the professor. "Were lost dogs part of your curriculum?"

She turned in the doorway and left a warm smile, as if it had been a bright, astral body of herself, behind her. Ferris thought of it as her composite smile; it seemed to occupy the room after she had gone. Tessa did not return to the study, and for once he was not sorry. He was much shaken. He did not feel strong enough to undergo the agitation of another interview with his wife.

Walled In

About four o'clock he was surprised to hear her high-pitched voice shrilling through the hall; she seemed to be unusually irritable, and scolded Trip for something. After considerable delay she sauntered into the study; her leisurely unconcern with his distress and suspense affected Ferris like a physical blow.

"Do speak!" he said, feverishly.

"Honorias sent me home." Tessa stopped before a little mirror in the study bedroom; she gave two or three pats to her black hair before she spoke again. "She sent me on ahead; she didn't find me useful; she told me to come home by train and tell you she should stay till she found that dog; she thinks she is on the track of him. I was to tell you not to feel too sure, but that she has some hopes. I think she said she wouldn't come home without him—some preposterous thing. That's Honorias. She is always so strenuous. She isn't a child of nature, like me. She said she understood exactly how you feel about Philos. I told her I didn't, but she was welcome to. She's kept the horse, and she's careering all over the country after that little beast. You never saw anything like it. Why, she stops everybody she meets and demands a cocker-spaniel or his life."

Ferris thrashed over on his pillow.

"You didn't leave her to drive home alone, did you? It may be dark before she gets back, and she is a stranger, you know, Teasie."

"Oh, I forgot," said Tessa, whirling away from

Walled In

the mirror like a radiometer. "I don't know how I came to, either. It's very interesting. We met your adored and adoring president."

"What! Hildreth?"

"He'd been somewhere, and we struck him at the Junction when I took the train. I introduced him to Honoria, and he was very civil; he said he knew what a blow this would be to you; he said he would help her find the dog and drive her safely home; he said to tell you not to give the matter another thought."

"Oh, very well," said Ferris, patiently.

He turned and seemed to sleep, but could not; and seemed to rest, but might not; and tried to hope, but dared not. The afternoon dragged across his bed like some heavy, wounded creature, and it came on to be dusk and dark.

It has been said that the world is divided into two classes of people—the dog-loving, and the dog-less—and only the one class will understand or perhaps respect the emotion of Myrton Ferris when, at the dead of the June evening, wheels stopped before his house. It was now half-past eight o'clock; he had been listening for six hours. It was as if his whole being had become one auditory nerve. His lamp was not yet lighted, and in the dark there—no one to see—he pressed both hands upon his ears that he might neither hear nor know that he did not hear the rush of little feet across the two long halls—the excited, explanatory barks, the ecstatic cries—the rapture of reunion after anguish.

Walled In

Only a lost dog found can add that sound to the joy of this sad world; and he who can hear it coldly misses something from his nature whose loss he will not, because he cannot, estimate.

So, because he would not hear and could not see, it came to the sick man by the sense of feeling that the dog was in his arms.

Philos lay there brokenly, as if he had no longer strength to move. He had put up his paws like hands and groped upon his master's cheek. Ferris was saying,

"Little chum! Little chum!"

The spaniel replied by half-suffocated sighs of love.

"Why!" breathed a low voice quite near. "He sobs like a child!"

"Oh—you!"

Ferris put out a trembling hand: in the dusk, Honoria took it; her grasp was strong, like a man's, and more gentle than that of most women.

"How did you ever do it?" he cried.

"It was very simple," said Honoria. "I was *thorough*; that was all."

"I know," interrupted Ferris. "Few people are. It is the conclusive trait. Had he gone far?"

"Ten miles. She had ridden a roundabout way. I saw we weren't making any headway, so I got out and walked the horse from door to door. I inquired at every house. I asked every single person I met—that was all. At last I struck this clue: I met a grocer, and he said, 'Madam, I can tell you

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where your dog is.' So he sent me down the creek. Your president drove me; it was rather a lonesome place. A boy had dragged the little creature off; he was tied up in a wood-shed. He seemed pretty glad to see me. I don't believe he'll give me any more of those malignant looks."

"Had Philos suffered? How did he act? How had he been treated?"

Honorio hesitated. "I wouldn't ask any more questions if I were you. You've got him—"

"Some time," said Ferris, in a surcharged voice, "I shall thank you."

"Why?" asked Honorio.

"By the way," inquired Ferris, in a tone as abrupt as her own, "how did he strike you?"

"Philos?"

"I referred to the president of Routledge College," answered Ferris, laughing for the first time since the morning of that unhappy day.

"Oh, he was polite," replied Honorio; "and I thought he was fond of you. I didn't notice him particularly—unless, well, yes, I thought he seemed particularly a gentleman."

Up to this point it had not occurred either to Ferris or to Honorio, so absorbed were they in the "not themselves," that they were alone in the invalid's dark room; speaking, he to a formless voice, and she to a viewless form.

"There is Ann with lights," said Honorio, composedly. She stood quietly where she was as Ann put the lamp down. Ferris could see the radiance

Walled In

of her joyous eyes for an instant before the rest came chatting in—Tessa and Mr. Hildreth, and Trip trailing behind in his night-gown, to ask if Philos could be shut in the go-rash because he ran away.

Ferris did not sleep that night, and in the morning expressed the wish not to be disturbed. It was afternoon before he sent for Honoria. She did not betray the appeal that his appearance made to her trained eye, but quietly took the stout chair beside him; he noticed that she refrained from asking him any questions.

"You sit differently from other people," he began. "I don't know exactly why; don't fuss about in the chair, for one thing."

"It is the professional attitude, I suppose. Nurses have to acquire it. When it comes to serious watching it is something of an art. Once I sat by a woman's bedside for seventy hours; it was life and death—but she got well."

"You don't mean that you had no sleep all that while?"

"In that case, none."

"Have you often had to do things like that?" asked Ferris.

"I don't remember any other just like that. Of course one has a tough time in the infectious wards occasionally."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Oh, diphtheria and scarlet fever and so on."

"You weren't assigned to those?"

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"Smallpox, if necessary. Why not?"

"I am very stupid," said Ferris. "I find it hard to understand the kind of life you have lived." He thought of its actuality, its seriousness, its dedication, and of her delicate personality. "I never happened to know anybody like you—not what we are accustomed to call a lady—who chose it; I mean, unnecessarily."

"There are not many," replied Honoria. "There ought to be more."

"How long have you been here?" asked Ferris, suddenly.

"Two days—almost."

"I should have said it was two months. It seems—why, as if you had lived here for a long time."

"A good deal has happened," suggested Honoria. "More than you will ever know," she thought. She touched the spaniel with hesitating finger-tips. Philos was curved upon his master's arm; he lay like a stuffed dog, too tired or too happy to stir; upon his warm head the sick man turned a tender cheek now and then.

"I want to have a talk with you," observed Ferris, "about several things."

"Do you think you had better—to-day?"

"Why, I slept!" urged Ferris. "I slept almost an hour this morning. I have never done such a thing before. There is always such a lot of noise about the house. To-day it was as still as—as heaven,"

Walled In

"I never thought of heaven as a particularly quiet locality," remarked Honoria. A little scintillant light just missing of a smile stirred across her face. "One thinks of it as a kind of symphony concert—in a chronic form."

"Miss Honoria? How did the house happen to be so still this morning? It was phenomenal; like apparitions, or the spirit vocabulary; it is material for the psychical research people. Do you know anything about it? Was it *your* doing?"

"I wouldn't ask, if I were you. I have found out a good while ago—haven't you?—how often it is best in life to take things for granted. Sometimes it spoils them to talk about them."

"But I must say," insisted Ferris, in a low voice, "I *cannot* say how I thank you. You can have no idea what a kindness you have done me. It seems to me incredible—Tessa—Trip—the servants—the door-bell—the tradesmen—all the whole domestic babel was absolutely held under for two hours. I can conceive of nothing but a miracle—or a general—that could have done it."

"Why not a trained nurse?" asked Honoria, laughing.

"Did you ever see Miss Binder? Or Miss Docer?"

"Oh, ten thousand times."

"Why do you take such exquisite trouble, such—such womanly care and thought? Don't think I don't understand what it involves."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Honoria. "I think

Malled In

I was born to take trouble for somebody. Perhaps it's partly what you call thoroughness."

"No, it was you who said thoroughness—I don't think this is exactly thoroughness. It is something a little different. Never mind what! It puts me under the same obligations, whatever we call it. . . . When are you going to take my case, Miss Honoria? What do you advise me to do? Do you know anybody who *can* make a man of a mummy? Any fellow out of the usual order? Surgeons seem to me to stand with their hands joined like a row of paper dolls cut out of one pattern."

"I have known one inspired man, out of the doctors I have met," replied Honoria, slowly. "He is not a surgeon. I don't think it is surgery you need. I don't even think it is doctors."

"I suppose you mean it is inspiration?"

"Or affection," thought Honoria, but she did not say what she thought. Ferris felt that he could almost have plucked the word from her shut lips; he perceived in her a reticence not common among the women whom he knew—the young women, the good women without histories to conceal. He was conscious that it had become a second nature to this girl to say what she should, to do the thing she ought. He remembered that she had met men of consequence, and that she was acquainted with life; he remembered what a tremendous depth of life it was in which she had toiled so terribly and so simply—a submarine diver, modestly at work

Walled In

fathoms below the shining surfaces of society, of art, of literature, of the comfortable things that other people of her social order took to be the ends of action or feeling. He felt that one came up against an armor in her character; it had the solidity that is fashioned only by selected experience nobly met.

He found himself fumbling for the idea that she had no pell-mell experiences; nothing haphazard, nothing that she did not like to recall, or would be unwilling that others should know. Tessa, in the parlor at the piano, was singing in her thin, trained voice,

"Praying that Heaven ever keep thee,
So pure, so fair, so bright!"

"Do you hear that?" asked Ferris. His sad, listening eyes turned to Honoria. "Come!" His tone changed with Tessa's key, which plunged from "Du bist wie eine Blume" to "Dear old Dutch." "Tell me! Where is that inspired fellow you talk about? Is he accessible?"

"Very much so. He is in Boston now."

"Will you telegraph him to come to me?"

"I will write. Won't that do? And hadn't I better speak to Tessa?"

"A man must choose his own chances of life," replied Ferris, without hesitation. "I know she thinks highly of her cousin's professional opinion—she has so few relatives; it is perfectly natural."

"Oh, perfectly," assented Honoria, almost too

Walled In

readily. "I only thought if the two happened to meet it might be a little awkward. I think Tessa is expecting Dr. Pierpont before long; he will be on his way to somewhere, and may stop over for a day—I believe she said so; I may be mistaken."

"You don't think, do you—" Myrton stopped. He had never yet discussed his wife with a third person; he had never allowed any one to criticise her in his presence. But this was Tessa's sister. It suddenly occurred to him as possible that Honoria understood Tessa better than he did.

"I know she is fond of Dr. Pierpont," he ventured, groping for the right words, "and of course she saw a good deal of him in New York this spring when your mother was ill."

"Oh yes," answered Honoria; "that was natural, too."

Out of the husband's eyes leaped one of the smouldering questions that care no more than fire cares for the traditions of what a man had better say about his wife. Honoria's eyes did not flee the answer; they met his steadily and gravely; neither spoke again about Tessa, and both began, a little hastily, to talk of other things.

"I repeat," said Ferris, "there are some questions a man must decide for himself. I will tell Tessa that I have requested you to summon this doctor you trust. You will find she will take it prettily."

"I am sure she will," Honoria hastened to reply. "Don't you know any man of muscle and sense

Walled In

who could help you out-of-doors?" she added, unexpectedly. "It would need both—as massage does; and you may need that. I could teach some sympathetic fellow how to do a good many things for you in the right way."

"Oh, we've been through all that," said Ferris, wearily. "I won't be tortured again. Brander would do anything, of course—and Carl Taker; but I've given that all up."

"There's that young Sheffield," suggested Honoria. "He's an athletic fellow."

"I don't want Sheffield," said Ferris, shortly.

"You see," sighed Honoria, "no matter what my theories are, I cannot act. That comes of being in the abject profession, as I told you. That is why I suggested bringing in this authority. It is a very eminent one. I do not think you have any right to assume that you must go on as you are. You have not had sufficient advice—nor varied advice."

A subdued but powerful excitement surcharged the face of the invalid.

"Do you think—do you really think—"

"I am not allowed to think," returned Honoria.

They did not talk any more that day. In the evening Ferris saw her playing in the garden with Trip and Philos; she romped like a girl and laughed; she had the delightful laugh of a cheerful woman with a sweet voice. There were a good many roses in the garden, and yellow lilies stood in rows, like tall candles; Honoria's long, thin, black skirt caught

Walled In

on something and dragged her to a stop among the lilies; while she was trying to disentangle it Tessa brought a caller into the garden, and he stepped up to help Honoria. It was Mr. Hildreth.

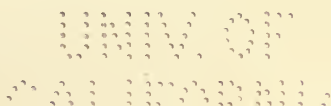
"You are a prisoner to an unseen thorn," he said, smiling.

Ferris lay watching them through the open window. Tessa took Trip away to put him to bed, and the president and Honoria strolled up and down the garden walk between the rows of yellow lilies. Hildreth regarded her with the pleased, but tentative and critical interest of a man who had known the brilliant women of his own country, and not a few in others. Honoria's lace waist was white, and her lambent coloring seemed to grow out of it, like the unopened from the open petals of a flower. Ferris noticed the extraordinary absence of coquetry which he had observed in her before. Honoria talked to the college president as if they had been two directors on some hospital board; as if there were things of consequence to be said. Mr. Hildreth stayed some time. It was nearly, not quite, dark when he went away. The evening was sultry, and Ferris had pushed his pillows over almost upon the window-sill that he might get whatever air there was.

A step brushed the gravelled avenue, and he perceived that Honoria had stopped in walking by on her way to the piazza. The half-grown cosmos was between them, so that she could not come very near the window. She spoke at once:



THE PRESIDENT AND HONORIA STROLLED UP AND DOWN THE
GARDEN WALK



Walled In

"Mr. Hildreth asked me to tell you that he did not come in because you ought not to see people in the evening. He came to see how you bore the effects of yesterday, and to ask about Philos. He sent his love to you. . . . I have posted that letter," she added. "It went by the evening mail. I thought you would like to know."

In three days Honoria's physician came—a silent man, with a strong head, and eyes in which an optical miracle seemed to have combined the lenses of the microscope and telescope. The consultation was a long one, and on the part of the eminent man uncommunicative—ominously so, Ferris thought. As before, he asked the consultant no question; and as before, the old family doctor took the stranger to the train. The distinguished man delayed, however, to discuss the case with Honoria. Midway of the garden was an old-fashioned grape-arbor, gray and staggering beneath the weight of years; the arbor had narrow seats set opposite to one another. The doctor and the nurse occupied these seats, and Ferris, from his window, could see, although he could not hear, the two. The great physician's manner had that marked respect, delicately warmed by admiration, which Ferris had already noticed in every man whom he had seen approach her; the very boys had something of it—even Sheffield. The physician and Honoria clasped hands when he went away, not as men and women do who meet in the light world; but grave-

Walled In

ly, with the grasp of comrades who have fought together on sombre battle-fields, where the carnage of disease slays more than shot and shell.

She came immediately into the study. Ferris was sitting in his tall, stuffed chair. He turned his averted face, but did not look at her.

"Well?" he panted.

Honorio's low voice seemed to rise like a wave from a fathomless sea of pity, and to fill the room. He felt that she compassionated him too much not to tell him the truth.

"He thinks," she said at once, "that the spine has received a severe shock. But there is no incurable organic lesion—you cannot possibly understand how much that means. He says you have a fighting chance."

IX



It was tradition at Routledge that commencement week was always hot—commencement when the town brimmed with visitors; when the houses of the faculty were packed to the eaves; when the trustees sat in ermine and purple; when the students took the bit between their teeth; when the alumni sprang like forgotten annuals from unknown roots; when the nights resounded with reunions and banquets; when the glee clubs sang till morning; when class yell and college yell fought for supremacy through reverberating halls and re-echoing streets, long past the sultry midnight; when the professors wished they had been mechanics, and the professors' wives wished they had married dry-goods clerks; when the intellectual life did not seem worth its cost in neurasthenia, and the academic atmosphere—at ninety-five degrees in the shade—palled upon its cultivated victims.

In the summer of which we speak the commencement thermometer broke its record; it rose but slowly, with a comfortable reluctance, and the week opened with some of the most resplendent

Walled In

days that the late New England June can offer to its hill country. These were now yielding to a south and sultry wind.

Professor Ferris sat in his wheeled chair on the piazza at the shaded side of his house. Brander and Carl Taker had brought him there (they did so every day), and left him with his screen, his table, his bell, and his dog. He had asked for the radio-meter, too. He could now propel the chair a little way about the piazza. If it were worth while he could take a few steps, and so enter or leave the house; but this transcendent liberty as yet had the nature of license; it was rated a luxury, and treated accordingly.

There were vines on the piazza, through which the light sparkled and trickled. Some one came out from time to time and moved his screen when the sun overtook him. This, though not always, was usually Honoria. "She is the only person in the house who thinks," he said—but not to her. One day it leaped to his thought to add, "She seems to be the only one who cares." He shut the words out of his mind, as one closes a heavy shutter to keep out the lightning. His gratitude to her was so passionate, his reverence for her was so profound, that he would not suffer himself to be critical of Tessa—if partly for Honoria's sake. He thought of Tessa with the obstinate idealization of a man whose affection and intellect are at war.

He found it impossible to ignore the coldness—

Walled In

it seemed the growing coldness—and neglect of his wife; it was as impossible for him not to love her in spite of that. For a little flower, Tessa had rooted herself at a painful depth in him. He longed for her tenderness like a lover; he forgave its absence like a husband. He thought of her—he thought of her till he could think no more. Sometimes he fell upon savage moments when he felt that he must forget her to save his soul alive. These occurred more frequently than they used to do. He was conscious of a curious complex effort in both mind and heart as if at once he held and lost the image of his wife.

It was late afternoon of a day midway of commencement week. The professor, from his wheeled chair, could see the small, crowded garden, where the lilies were beginning to droop and the roses to multiply. He could see the gray arbor, whose narrow seats were draped with the heavily patterned tapestry of light and shade that is made by grape leaves; he could see the white-hot Doric pillars of the president's house; beyond, the glittering river; nearer, the arcade of elms a hundred years old that dignified the long and now thronged and tumultuous street; below, the college buildings; and above, the hills. But for that line of high horizon it was a narrow map for a man's eyes, and his were violently impatient of it. His athletic past, his out-of-door temperament made him a poor prisoner. As he had gained in power of locomotion the mercury of his restlessness mounted fretfully. When

Walled In

the wind blew a magazine off from his lap a good round "Damn!" pursued it.

"If I had been a woman," he complained to Honoria, who came out upon the piazza with a cup of something, "I should be embroidering Bible texts by this time."

"In cross-stitch, on cardboard," assented Honoria, "framed in passe-partout, and distributed to friends."

"Or exchanging 'Shut-in' leaflets by mail with other poor devils. Do you know they've begun to send them to me right along? I had another package yesterday."

"I'd *like* to laugh," said Honoria, shaking her head, "but I can't. I have seen those things bring such a mysterious amount of comfort. You cannot possibly imagine how little it takes to give pleasure to a small person with a great trouble to bear."

"And yet you laugh when you hear me swear."

"Why, of course! It means you are better. I hate to see a sick man patient. It's a bad symptom."

"On that therapeutic theory, I must be going to get better. Come!"

"I believe you are," said Honoria; "I mean you shall."

He looked straight into her shining eyes; they shimmered a little, as light does on water; he had never seen anything at all like tears in them before.

Walled In

"Oh, look here!" he cried. "If I do—if I ever should—it will be your doing!"

"Drink your beef juice," answered Honoria, in her professional tone. "It is getting as cold as a worn-out flirtation."

"Who is swearing now? I never heard you use such a word. Miss Honoria? Before you came—"

"Well? Before I came?"

"Oh, a thousand things. For one, they gave me the modern cereals. Half of them, I'll take my oath, were powdered dog-bread; the other half were last year's shorts. A mummy likes to be treated like a man, even if he knows he isn't."

"I like to hear you laugh," rippled Honoria. "Then I'm *sure* you are better. For a person who has been shut out as long as you have—"

"Why do you say 'shut out'? I've noticed you do—I'm afraid you haven't graduated in leaflets."

"Because you are shut out from so much more than you are shut in to," replied Honoria, quickly. A blur of touching gratitude softened Ferris's too brilliant blue eyes.

"How do you happen to understand everything? Nobody else—" He checked himself. "Where is Tessa?" he asked, in a rehabilitated tone. "I haven't seen her since morning."

"Why, didn't she tell you? I supposed, of course—I thought you knew." Honoria, for the first time since he had known her, changed color in evident embarrassment.

Walled In

"She has driven over to the Junction. She is expecting a guest."

"We decided not to entertain this year," said Ferris, quickly. "I told her that I could not do it. The excitement and late hours take so much out of me, and it is so important just now that I should make the most of whatever chances I have. You know how that is."

"Yes, I know," said Honoria, sadly. "I did the best I could. I tried to put a stop to it. But it won't last long. He is on his way to the Adirondacks, I believe."

"It's that cousin, is it? It is Dr. Pierpont."

"He will go on with his journey in a day or two," urged Honoria. "I told her it was an unfortunate time. I said some other week would do just as well, and not be so hard on you. You have a good deal to undergo this commencement, anyhow."

"More than you know," answered Ferris, in a low voice. "More depends on this week than anybody knows. I needed every nerve I have. I told her so. . . . Now they will sit up and talk half the night," he exclaimed, with the pathetic forecast of trouble which the well find it so hard to understand or respect in the sick. "And the boys will yell the other half. And to-morrow—I have a very important interview before me to-morrow. I must have all my wits about me. I can't go through it on the rack!"

"I think she means to take Cousin Dick to somebody's reception this evening. Perhaps the house

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will be quieter than you expect," said Honoria; her voice was as if she ached aloud. "Sometimes Teasie will do what I ask her. I do try to make things easier for you."

"You have made everything easier for me!" cried the professor, in an outburst of uncontrollable candor. "Why, you must know that this has been another house since you came into it. Such consideration — such unremitting carefulness, such thinking of things! And, oh, the blessed quiet! The nights when a fellow could get to sleep without lying awake to listen for noises he couldn't put a stop to—as Carlyle did for the rooster! And then, such an influence as you have over others—over Trip and every one!"

"If you overestimate me so," argued Honoria, not without emotion, "think how hard you will make it for me."

"Hard for you? How could I possibly—"

"Why, when I am floating around Boston harbor with those slum babies. They won't say such nice things. They are not professors of rhetoric."

"Are you determined to do that preposterous thing?" demanded Ferris, impatiently.

"A nurse does not break her engagements."

"Oh, very well." Ferris spoke coldly, she thought, and Honoria looked a little hurt.

"It is only for July and August, you know."

"Will you come—are you sure to come back when your slum cruise is over?"

"If you and Tessa wish it."

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"Very well," repeated Ferris. He took the magazine which Honoria had picked up and returned to his piazza table. She saw that he did not read the pages which he whipped through his fingers.

"The radiometer is sitting out this dance," she observed. She shifted the glass toy on the table just beyond the shade of the screen; it met a glint of vine-light and began to waltz merrily.

"What a sensitive thing it is!" she exclaimed. "I never get used to it."

"It suffers proportionately."

"And enjoys, too."

"Oh, I suppose so."

"Professor?"

"Well, Honoria?"

"I *will* come back when I am through with the Boston babies. I begin to think I am really needed—perhaps as much as anywhere—in this house."

"God knows!—yes."

"Tessa has urged it very much, very often."

"Oh, you are an immense relief to Tessa. You know how she feels about sickness—how it seems to frighten her, to repel her. She can't help it. She is made up that way. I don't blame Tessa, you understand—not in the least."

"I understand. She was always just so. She—"

A cruel noise crashed into Honoria's quiet sentence. Trip, in his white piqué, with a new drum, sallied from the go-rash and marched shrieking up and down the avenue:

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"A reube-o-path! A rub-e-o-path! Papa's got a rub-e-o-path! A Brander new rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub, dub-a-dub, *dub-e-o-path!*"

Honorina, with a little inarticulate exclamation, ran. Trip had made a military *détour* into the garden, and there she flanked him. Ferris pushed aside the woodbine and watched her as she moved among the roses. She played with Trip for a few minutes, as if she had been another little boy. It seemed to be made part of the game that she should be appointed drummer. By whatever military tactics, she obtained possession of the drum. He saw her lead the child away, talking to him earnestly.

"She can do anything with Trip," he thought.

Honorina did not return to the piazza, but disappeared with the boy. Ferris was alone with Philos and the radiometer when he saw, and was a little startled to see, the tall figure of the college president swinging along the sidewalk. Mr. Hildreth came up the steps with his straw hat in his hand, but did not immediately seek the professor; to whom the circumstance assumed an uncomfortable significance until it occurred to him that Honorina or Tessa, unseen at the front of the house, might be the cause of the momentary detention. This lasted, however, longer than Ferris had expected, and he was beating a devil's tattoo on the arms of his chair when Mr. Hildreth came around the corner of the house. As the president settled himself in the bamboo settee beside the invalid,

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he jarred the screen a trifle and changed its position. This shut the vine-light from the radio-meter, which stopped dancing, as a happy person stops singing at bad news. Mr. Hildreth did not speak at once, but Ferris did:

"I did not expect you till to-morrow. What has happened?"

"Nothing decisive—that is, not irrevocable, yet. I did not mean to come till I could give you a final report. But I thought it would be best not to wait for their evening session. They will look in on my reception for five minutes, and then slip away. There is no doubt but they will have a quorum. I have seen most of the executive committee."

The professor's fingers stopped slapping and snapping the arms of the wheeled chair.

"What's the upshot?" he asked, with unconcealed agitation.

"Not exactly what I hoped. I am disappointed, I admit. Of course there is the chance that when it comes to a vote—"

"You mean you don't think it had better come to a vote? I see."

"That is for you to say, Ferris. That is why I am here."

"My resignation is in your hands," faltered the invalid professor. "It has been there—how long?"

"Several months, at least."

"Put it in, President Hildreth. Put it in whenever you see fit—this afternoon, if you say so."

"In an unqualified form that strikes me as too

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extreme a step. I may be wrong— Your pillows are slipping. Allow me—”

Hubert Hildreth had the manner of the wide world; in emotional crises it did not forsake him; if it had devolved upon him to break the heart of his best friend he would have done so politely, or even incidentally. He had not the spontaneity of Ferris, who sometimes chafed under the more calculating temperament of the other, or even resented the definable effect of merely social phases of life upon an intellectual man—a man who had chosen an academic calling to which he was distinctly by taste an alien. The professor was, therefore, surprised and moved when, on turning his gray face, he saw unmistakable tears in the eyes of his friend.

“*What death shall he die, my lord? A sudden; or a subtle?*” quoted Ferris, quickly. “Give me the sudden. Tell me the worst, at once.”

“There is nothing worse,” replied Hildreth, “than a general and profound scepticism as to your probable recovery; it seems to have pervaded the whole board. It is especially deep-rooted in the executive committee, and of course you know how such things work.”

“The tyranny of the committee! Every man knows what it is. If the committee wishes me to resign, I had better spare them the necessity of telling me so.”

“No one *wishes* you to resign,” argued the president, more fervently than he was apt to speak. “There is but one opinion as to your value to

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Routledge; not a dissenter could be found if you tried for it. Your chair could not be filled as you fill it. Your loss would be a calamity to the college which it is impossible to overestimate. This is widely and cordially recognized. You are by all odds the favorite professor on the faculty—hardly less beloved by the trustees than you are by the students.”

“Trustees never love,” retorted Ferris. “It isn’t in them. They’re a batrachian lot, like—like—” He paused for a figure. “Like frogs with their heads cut off,” he added, bursting into a forlorn laugh. He tried savagely to hide his emotion in his poor jest. He would have given a bitter price for the nerves of a well man to meet this blow with.

“They will vote to continue your salary for six months from the time that your resignation—assuming that you felt yourself obliged to resign—should go into effect. Your house, I think, they would wish you to retain for a year—possibly longer, if you are still disabled,” Hildreth hastened to say.

“That is, if I couldn’t *get* out they would leave the roof over my head till I could!”

“I repeat,” insisted the president, soothingly, “they have the warmest personal feeling to yourself. They may lack imagination; it is a common difficulty. As a class, they are hardly men of the broadest experience, you know. I think you are a little hard on them, if you will allow me. Take

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Strong, for instance—Gamaliel L. Strong. He is with you on every occasion. He is really fond of you.”

“I know,” answered Ferris, penitently. “He is very good to me. I beg his pardon. I suppose,” he suggested, in a lower tone, “it does not help my prospects any that my wife is understood to have property?”

“Possibly not. But for that circumstance it is probable, I should say, that you would be voted a longer continuance of your salary—under the conditions; they are recognized as distressing and unusual; and your value to the college is rated at no common estimate.”

“I do not think I am as ungrateful as I sound,” pleaded the professor, in a shaken, humbled voice. “The trustees have been very kind to me all this while. I don’t forget that. You’ll tell them I don’t, won’t you?”

He turned away his face. His friend could see the quivering of his drawn mouth beneath its brown beard.

“What do *you* think I had better do, Hildreth? You must have some plan. You always do. Your head is full of them. You are a natural organizer.”

“If you really wish my advice—” hesitated Mr. Hildreth.

“Does a drowning fellow really wish to be yanked out of the water?” cried Ferris, with the swift irritability of acute suffering. “Don’t play with a poor devil of a crippled beggar! You’re not hand-

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ling a national convention or a European drawing-room. . . . Pardon me, President Hildreth," added the professor, immediately, "I am not—I suppose I didn't really expect this. You must forgive me!"

"I thought I was the one to be forgiven—that I have not been able to prevent it," replied the president, gently. "I take it for granted you believe I have done my best. It would be easier to manage a European drawing-room or a national convention than a board of college trustees—a country college, too. . . . If I were you I think I *should* send in my resignation, just as things are."

"Put it in before supper," commanded Ferris. He trembled visibly. The other could see that he was hard hit.

"But I should qualify it," suggested Mr. Hildreth. "Take six months more. Use three of them to get better—to test your chances. You certainly have improved lately; I can see that; everybody can. Send in your resignation to take effect three months after the opening of the next semester, if by that time it should be clear that you cannot get back to your class-room."

Ferris moved the wheeled chair away for a few feet, and sat in such a position that his friend could not see his face; it worked, and he covered it with his thin hands.

When he spoke it was in a dull voice.

"I will be back in my class-room next term. I will be there dead or alive, and make the experi-

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ment. You can tell them so. Send in my resignation on those conditions. . . . And, President Hildreth, don't mind a thing I say. You're just as good a friend, for aught I see, as if you had bad manners—say as bad as mine. If you'd never been beyond a church sociable, or a fresh-water promenade concert, you couldn't have managed this thing better."

The two men clasped hands without another word, and the president hurried away. Ferris watched him till his tall figure—distinguished by the *Je ne sais quoi* from the too consciously academic commencement crowd—blended into the swelling cloud of frock-coats that had descended upon the town.

No one came near the professor for some time, and for this he thanked whatever gods the earthquake of that hour had left him. If it knocked one or two more from his diminishing Olympus, who so poor in charity as to find a fault in him for that? A man may bear the ruin of his health, the devastation of his home—poverty, bereavement, heartbreak—but until he has faced professional failure, or the undeserved overthrow of his career, he knows neither what fortune can hurl upon him, nor what its outrage can wring from him: whether groans or outcries, oaths or prayers, who, not knowing him better than his own soul, shall say?

Tessa came out on the piazza. She wore a new dress which she had saved for the president's re-

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ception. It was an imported affair of silk gauze; it was embroidered, and fluttered with butterflies from neck to foot. The butterflies were iridescent, and not too strongly defined. They blended into a misty gray background like that which would be made by leaves and flowers dripping in a fog. Tessa's taste in dress had never achieved a daintier success, and her husband's smitten eyes gleamed for an instant at the sight of her. Her throat and arms were bare and beautiful. In deference to the unfortunate standards of Routledge society, a few butterflies on strips of gauze crossed her shoulders and fell into the shortest sleeves that a professor's wife could be permitted to wear. Her eyes held their half-elfin, half-amorous glitter. Tessa had the look which Myrton had long since recognized as coincident with the presence of some admiring man.

"I am going to take Dick to the president's reception," she began, without giving her husband a chance to speak. "He is on his way to the Adirondacks, and it is so nice that he happened to come just in time for it. We will go early and come late, and not bother you a bit. You'll want to see him, of course. Shall I bring him in?"

He hesitated, lifting his devastated face from his rolling-chair. How could he break the hard truth to that shimmering creature? As well seek comfort in the silken wings that embroidered her trailing dress. How soft a thing she looked in it! How hard she was!

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He perceived that it is not an easy matter for a man to say to himself, when he is grappling with a great trouble, "The last person to help me to bear it will be my wife."

"Oh, you are always in trouble," said Tessa, lightly. "You are born to suffer about something. For my part, I think suffering comes to people who seek it. Well, I will hear all about it to-morrow, Myrton. We will have it out then. Won't that do? Good-night, you poor old dear!"

She stooped and brushed his forehead with her lips. They were no warmer than the antennæ of the butterflies that seemed to flutter between himself and her as she gathered her transparent train from its long gray silk skirt and dipped away.

"I will send Honoria out with your supper," she called back. "She can listen to troubles forever; that is her profession. Mine is—"

"What is your profession, Teasie?"

"To be happy," said Tessa, promptly. "I was born to be, and I have been educated to be. And I mean to be." She brought her red lips together so that the hard lines in her cheeks showed; they would be deep if she lived ten years. Her sparkling eyes had their cold color, but Ferris could not see them, for she stood behind his chair.

Honoria came out presently with his supper; she did not speak. She set the tray down, with her quiet, experienced hands, upon his table, but made no futile protest when she saw that he could

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not eat. He noticed that she did not look at him.

"Aren't you going to the reception, too?" he tried to say in his ordinary tone.

"Not in this." Honoria touched her plain black dress. "How could you think I could go anyway—to-night?"

Her controlled chin quivered. It was one of Honoria's beautiful expressions; he had seen it but two or three times. Her low voice was scarcely audible to his acute attention.

"Oh, I have heard! President Hildreth told me. I think he thought you would need watching—extra care. I am so sorry that . . . that I cannot say anything about it. You *were* better. You *could* have been better, and now, just as we are struggling up, to have so many things happen!"

She put out her warm, strong hand; it fell for an instant upon his. It was less than the chartered touch of a nurse; it was less than the permissible clasp of a relative and a house-mate. But it gave the stricken man a consciousness of more sorrow for what he must suffer than it seemed to him that any one else in the world could offer to his extremity, or would.

Now she, too, stood behind his tall chair, close behind it, and her face, too, he could not see. It was broken from brow to throat with the exquisite pity of a woman to whom the pain of others is a more real thing than her own happiness or ease.

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"I have decided not to go away just yet," she said. "I will wait until August. I will stay with you till this hard July is passed. That hospital is a popular charity—cool work; it will be easy to get substitutes. I will find one. I will telegraph to-night. You *shall* get back to work next term, if there is any power on earth. . . . I mean, if I can do anything to help you do so. I have never deserted a patient yet. I don't mean to begin with you. You and I will fight this out together."

Ferris put up his hand without a word, and sought for hers; he did not find it; but when his arm fell back he saw what he had felt upon his wrist—the splash of a tear.

It was half-past ten o'clock of class-day night. The professor's house, under Honoria's omnipresent eye, was perfectly still. The streets were temporarily quiet; for a few hours the receptions, the class and society suppers, would hold the throng; then it would burst its way to sing and shout and tramp the night out.

Ferris lay on his bed with wide eyes that strained into his hot, dark room. His only chance of a half-hour's unconsciousness stood before midnight. His brain, a furnace heated seven times, roared against his temples. His arms were stretched out from his sides as if he were crucified. Lightning flashed before his scalded eyes. He groped for the ice-cap that Honoria had left within his reach; in doing so he touched one of the roses whose breath wan-

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dered about his sultry room like a soul that had no body. Since Honoria came he had never been without flowers. He was vaguely comforted, as the sick are, by trifles implying kindness. Her little thoughtfulness seemed to him a large remembrance; it indefinitely quieted him, and the pause which precedes drowsiness began to creep upon his defiant nerves. It was even possible that he might have slept; but gradually there grew upon his ear the offence of two low human voices speaking in monotonies not very far off. Plainly, the sound did not come from the house. He decided that it did not belong to the piazza, and, drawing aside his drapery curtain, he looked out into the garden. There was a moon, and every object in the garden was vividly visible: the roses, the lilies, the unopened midsummer flowers, the gray arbor where the heavy tapestry of the grape-vine hung. A man and woman sat in the arbor; they occupied the narrow seats, not opposite, but side by side. They were talking with the steady eagerness of people who have forgotten that they did not mean to be overheard.

The grating of their voices filed his ears; it seemed to his tormented sensibilities to become the unbearable thing, and to last the unbearable time. The moon was so brilliant that he fancied he could see the embroidered butterflies on the dress of his wife. . . . Look! Was that a hand which stroked her shoulder softly, as if it were collecting a specimen? Then Honoria crossed the avenue. She

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wore a white gown; it was girdled and closely fastened at the throat. She went down the garden walk and joined her sister and her cousin. The three sat in the arbor for a while, chatting quietly and naturally, but under breath. Then they all came back through the observant moonlight silently, and in a few minutes the house was still.

But now the night was not. The streets, the halls, the town rang with songs and shouts and yells, and rang till morning. The ancient poem of student life—old as education, proud as youth, vigorous as manhood—thrilled the hot, bright night. Ferris lay listening to the boys. Far down the street a thousand voices stormed the stately chorus that every college man has loved and sung:

“Gaudeamus igitur,
Juvenes dum sumus.”

Stirring slowly and plaintively after crept the old Southern melody which would draw a heart of parchment from the folded scroll of middle life or age:

“Nelly was a la—dy. . . .
My own Virginia bride.”

Then came the college yell of the professor's *alma mater*:

“Routledge!
Routledge!
Hi-ho-rah!”

X



It was July, and afternoon. Rutledge River swam lazily beneath its arched stone bridge; the movement of the current was sinuous and lethargic, like that of a water-serpent making its way from a mysterious source to an unknown end. The day had been very hot, and a breathless evening was crawling on reluctantly. A frail coolness had come from the water; there was none anywhere else. The banks of the creek were sultry and solitary; their massed shadows were riven with arrows of burning light, and seemed to watch the stream sombrely, like wounded guards.

The sky hung high above a descending and unclouded sun. Half a mile away the village drowsed as only the college village can when it gets the chance. The campus blazed, unvisited; with drawn shades the dormitory halls napped. A few professors, protected from the palpitating heat by academic umbrellas, straggled to the post-office. A stray professor's wife ran to call upon another without her hat. Students there were none, or so few as only to emphasize the absence of the ruling

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class. Not a boy in the empty streets, not a bird on a motionless bough, not a butterfly in the idle air but seemed to know that it was the long vacation. The town presented the appearance of gratified desolation peculiar to a university community when the institution has been let out to play.

On the river the boat-houses were locked, the landings deserted; now and then, when a shower of hot light dashed the stream, the swinging serpent seemed to sink, and the surface of the water stirred gracefully like a girl turning in her sleep. The river gave the impression of a dual nature, half vicious and half benign, and one might have been aware of observing it curiously to see which element would predominate. In the inlets or shallows of the creek there were many water-lilies, and they were at their bloom. Towards the banks the colors of the creek were dense as malachite and had its tints. The channel was smitten out in white-hot fire which, as the sun dipped, faded slowly.

In the slope of the afternoon, had any one been standing on the bridge (but no one was), a single boat might have been observed at least a mile upstream, and drifting down. This was a canoe, and in the fragile craft its usual freight—two passengers, a woman and a man. They were absorbed in thought or in talk; the paddle moved idly, and without the unrespite attention which is as necessary to the handling of a canoe as it is to the salvation of a soul. The current, which is powerful in the stealthiest weather under Routledge bridge,

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began to trouble the canoe a little as it approached the bend in the stream, and the man, arousing himself suddenly to the fact, paddled the boat skilfully out of the channel and into silent water. There it stayed for a moment swishing against the denial of a thousand thick, green lily-pads.

"I never saw so many," said the woman. "See!" She leaned a little, a very little, and let slide a drifting hand.

"Sit still, Mrs. Ferris!" cried the young man, in the voice of sharp command with which masculine instinct grips a feminine blunder.

Tessa's long, narrow hand came up triumphantly out of the water; it clutched a dripping lily, virgin white, and stately; the flower seemed to turn its neck upon its dull, red stem and to regard its captor.

"There! You foolish boy!" Tessa sank back against her crimson cushions, and looked at the student from over a wave of organdie ruffles that the change of posture had driven up against her throat. Upon that soft surface she laid the wet lily, which writhed in her fingers as she fastened it.

"We can't capsize again, you know," said the boy, sullenly. "That would be once too often."

"Things do happen once too often, in this world; I've noticed that."

Mrs. Ferris propped her dimple on her two little tanned hands, and observed the lad critically.

"It was good of you to run back here, Harry. You know I feel that, don't you? Why not stay

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a day or two? You're not looking just well, I fancy."

"I'm going back to-night," answered Sheffield, shortly. "And I don't know that it matters how I look."

"Oh, if you're going to be cross, Harry, you may row me ashore."

"Where?" asked the boy, listlessly. He took up the paddle.

"Right here." A slender finger pointed to the wooded bank across the lily-pads.

"I am sorry not to oblige you, Mrs. Ferris, but the thing is impracticable. They won't let us."

He struck the paddle into the dark water, and showed her the incredible resistance of the lilies, whose long, strong stems, thick pads, and waxen blossoms protested powerfully against the intrusion of the canoe.

"If I were alone," said Sheffield, "but with a lady aboard, I don't propose to risk it. They are too strong for us."

His young, lowering face gave no evidence of significance in his words; he was a straightforward boy by nature; all his emotions were primitive; he did not play with phrases, nor, indeed, always understand them, if they toyed with him. Something in his expression changed the key of Tessa's.

"Only another year, Harry! Then you will be gone. . . . I shall miss you. You will settle somewhere. You will marry somebody."

"Not in a hurry," blurted Sheffield. The bitter-

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ness in his miserable face seemed to extend like a frost, and to nip the smile from hers. For a moment Mrs. Ferris felt uncomfortable. A silence, which to a sensitive apprehension would have been more severe than any words, hurled upon her the accusation of a young man whose life had been spoiled by an older woman. The athletic masculinity of the boy's features suddenly intensified. He looked as if he had been beaten in a big, brutal game.

All the lads in all the world who have flung the buds of feeling beneath the trampling feet of a married woman seemed suddenly, arraigning her, to reinforce him.

Tessa watched him furtively. Gratified vanity, reduced by a slight discomfort, lolled in her languid black eyes; a certain personal perplexity might have been said to lurk there—but not regret, scarcely comprehension. The saddest thing about the moment was that she did not, or did not appear to, understand its significance enough to regret it or repent it. A fleck of her obstinate look dashed her face, which turned bright and brittle as it did when she had said to her husband: "I was born to be happy. And I mean to be."

Tessa, like her little son, was symmetrical. Swiftly and silently something was abstracted from or introduced beneath her mood: a leaf, a petal, a ripple, a glint of light on moving water, a dragon-fly steering through the hot air—who could say what? Immediately she gave another diagram, she was another color.

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"For God's sake!" cried Sheffield; "you will capsize us again! There! Sit still, I tell you!"

But Tessa balanced herself with one dexterous hand, and, obstinately trailing the other, bent peering into the water. Seen between the green, leathery pads which made as much effort to retain the canoe as they had to repel it, the river showed quite black. As far as eye could go, the strong stems of the lilies writhed; they had substance like that of flesh, and one wondered if like it they had sentience; the large, white flowers floated as happily as swans; they were beginning to drowse, for the day was declining; between their closing lids they were observant of Tessa. While she leaned looking down (it was unusual for Tessa not to speak) the lily at her throat became unfastened and fell.

"There!" cried the lad, "you've lost it."

The broken flower floated, dropping on the rapidly darkening water; a swirl of the stream caught it and carried it into the current.

"I wish I could get it back on its stem!" complained Tessa, unexpectedly, in her girlish, petulant way.

"But you know you can't," said Sheffield, in a matter-of-fact tone. "It is already drifting down. See! There's a butterfly on it."

While she turned her slow neck a yellow butterfly dipped to the whirling lily, and when it would have risen, one wing dragged in the water. Its little struggle was an instant, immeasurable thing, scarcely worth attention in a world full of human

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woe and wrong; yet the two in the canoe watched the butterfly, nor could they have told why, till the insect and the flower were submerged.

"Harry," asked Tessa, abruptly, "how deep is it down here?"

"You'll find out, if you don't sit straight—Steady there! Steady!"

"All those long, *long* stems," persisted Tessa, "do they grow down to the bottom? Do they have roots down there? And these pads and leaves and things—they seem to me dreadful—strong, like fingers; not like flowers. Do you suppose if anybody got in they would choke you? Would they twist about you and drag you? If you were sinking, but you had a chance to get out—somebody to help you—they would keep you under, they would hold you down. I am sure of it. That is just what they would do. . . . You would look up and lie there strangling, and you could be saved, but they wouldn't let you! . . . Harry, take me out of this place! Take me away this minute! I can't bear it! I tell you I can't bear to look at it! I want to get away—I want to get home! . . . What did you bring me here for?"

Sheffield sat staring and sullen.

"Why, because you asked me to," he said, stolidly. But he dipped his paddle without further words, pushed vigorously out of the lily-pads, and made up-stream as fast as he could. It was rather slow work, at best, for the serpent of the current withstood him, and the sun was setting when the

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canoe thudded softly on the landing of the nearest boat-house. Tessa sprang out, shivering; she did not wait for the student to help her; her organdie dress (it was the pink-sprigged one that made her look like a college belle) splashed in the river, and she stooped to wring it with her brown hands—her wet diamond burning above her wedding-ring. Sheffield was not an imaginative lad, but he was somehow reminded of the butterfly that had dragged its wing and so gone down with the lily.

When she raised her head she saw that some one walking on the river-path had stopped at the pier; no, he was not going by; he was looking at the lady and the lad.

Mrs. Ferris dimpled, and dropped her muslin flounce from her dripping fingers.

"Oh, President Hildreth," she said, gayly, "see how wet I am!"

The president of Routledge lifted his hat, not very far, to the professor's wife. He did not smile.

XI



T was August on Boston Harbor, and every plain, prosaic object was touched with the idealization which midsummer and morning give to the rude, the bustling, the squalid, or the sad.

The freight upon the wharves, dew-washed and fog-washed, piled irregularly, assumed incredibly decorative capacities; the longshoremen surprised the foreground as figures less profane than picturesque; a dirty coal-barge and a gurried halibut schooner, tacking out of the course of the shining steamer which the whole harbor honored, glittered in the shimmering, lifting fog. Even the ferryboat which saluted the Red Cross flag wore an unfamiliar face like that of an overworked peasant on a feast or a sacred day; and all the shipping turned poetic. The sun was riding up powerfully, and smote the flying fog which trailed away before it, in that exquisite mingling of reluctance and surrender, that delicate contest of fact and fancy, that illuminated blur of mist and outline which make a harbor on an August morning one of the most beautiful sights of sea or land.

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The Floating Hospital moved out slowly from her pier. Her decks were busy, and her wards were full. At her bow the blood-red cross upon its snow-pure ground hung languidly. As the steamer struck out into the channel (she had no motive power of her own, and was conveyed by a sober and laborious tug) the lungs of the air inhaled and exhaled a few times, and a thin breeze reached the flag, which unfurled joyously, and shot straight out against a sky of burning blue. One of the deckhands said to another:

“There’s a-goin’ to be an air.”

The wail of a baby somewhere who was still strong enough to cry, stopped; and another who had been too weak either to cry or to wail, stirred and moaned once or twice. The salt of the sea struck the panting passengers, and, as the Hospital-boat made out into the harbor, the flag, which had furled and unfurled a dozen times at the command of a breeze fickle because feeble, began to stream out steadily. A gentle wind awoke, and seemed disinclined to drowse again. The day promised to be alive and alight and trustworthy—the chosen of the season for the little Red Cross passengers.

Upon the upper deck, where the convalescent or the lighter cases were given their limit of space and liberty, a nurse with a sleeping baby on her lap sat something apart from the rest, her happy eyes moving from the beautiful panorama of the south shore to the child upon her knee. Although she wore the uniform of the hospital, she seemed some-

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how to have adapted it, and made it personal; in the same way she seemed to have adopted the nature of the nursing staff, which she assumed gently and humbly, seeking rather to compel herself to it, than to recall her distinction from it. Not a deaf-mute sign of her suggested to the daughters of the provinces or the trained self-respecting Celtic girls that she had not drowned her differences from themselves, in her deep dedication to the calling whose womanly and merciful ideals united them all. Yet there was not a nurse on board who did not feel that a difference existed.

The class distinctions which the American instinct tramples, receive, after all, a surprising amount of recognition from the very impulse which would ignore them if it could. "She is a lady," we often hear from reluctant lips whose social creed denies that there are any. "She is a lady," the Floating Hospital said of Honoria Tryde.

The infant on her lap was a little, weasened thing, scarcely a year set adrift upon a life so definitely foredoomed by its heredity that the honest soul of the educated nurse said to her: "Will the child thank me for saving it?" Partly to relieve herself from the discomfort of this embarrassing question, Miss Tryde took an opened envelope from the pocket of her gingham dress, and in the niche of the quiet hour while her little patient slept, re-read the already familiar pages of the letter. This, although it was a man's letter, was not short; but, then, it was written by a man

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ill and unoccupied. Certain portions of the letter especially held the attention of the nurse:

"Tessa is uncommonly well. The new assistant professor, I think, has made the vacation endurable to her; although she talks a great deal about York, and plainly finds it hard, poor child, to miss her accustomed summering. I have urged her to make some arrangement by which she can leave me, and take her usual trip.

"Of course, this new man will take my chair if the event proves that I cannot hold it—I understand that perfectly; he is here upon the transparent pretext of reducing my labors, when, and if, I resume them. His name is Yewserk—a Routledge fellow, one of my boys; he graduated in my first class; he has been doing time in a Western university. I have not yet overcome the instinct to put class-room conundrums to him: 'Who was the Father of English poetry?' or, 'Who wrote the Sonnet on the Sonnets?' or, for a change, 'I am obliged to observe, sir, that you are cutting prayers too often.' Yewserk studies at the library; he fits himself for the department. Incidentally, he is musical, and runs in to play the piano for Tessa. Yes, sometimes it is rather late. I don't deny that. But I don't know that admitting it helps the matter. *Does it help to admit things, do you think?* I find myself speculating in that direction this summer. How far is expression of feeling, under adverse conditions, useful, desirable, admissible, or creditable? If neither of these quadriga and respectable adjectives fits the instance, then the deaf-mute vocabulary—but no; it is *not* left. All subtle and sensitive natures perceive—I recall that; I may be sensitive, but I am not subtle. Let us say, all sincere people see that one is as responsible to 'God and the Flag' of one's soul for the lifting of an eyelid, as for the recitation of a creed. It strikes me that there may be a good deal of something approaching actual dishonor in the play of a feature, or the intonation

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of a voice, or—well, I am a blunt fellow, you know; I never took to the social diplomacies. I own they are distasteful to me. If ever I go wrong it will be in some big, blundering, downright fashion; I shouldn't squirm and play with facts—I should out with them, and take the consequences.

"Women especially—don't you think so? hide behind mysteriously transparent trifles—a veil of gauze, a lace fan, little pretences, moral confusions that deceive themselves more than they do spectators. But when I say 'women'—I remember that you are one.

"You ask, of course, how I am, and I am compelled to reply that I am not any better, thank you. I don't wear veils. I don't use fans. If I tried to deceive you, you would not be deceived.

"It strikes me that I am not as well as when you left. It is very hot. I don't sleep. Brander has stood by me like a hero or a lover (are these twain one?) all the vacation; he has been occupying the little room off the hall, and doing what he can. I can walk a few steps farther—but I don't sleep. The house is not as quiet as when you were in it. But you can form your own professional opinion when you get home. I suppose in point of fact I miss the nursing that I have had. It spoiled me. I have not been spoiled very much since my incomparable sister Jane used to sit up nights for me, or set my slippers toeing a line on the register where I could find them in the dark, if she had gone to bed. There was a tumbler of milk, too, on the dining-room table—and doughnuts. In short, I don't seem to have the force of character to resist your trained professional devotion and inexhaustible personal kindness. Believe that I estimate and appreciate both. Believe that I am not ungrateful—nor is my wife.

"Your presence in our household is the greatest comfort and relief to Tessa. She speaks of it often, and of you; never of you without some sign of real and affec-

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tionate feeling which, you know, she is not in the habit of indicating freely towards any person.

"I have thought more or less about the suggestion that you made to me that evening when Tessa was somewhere, and Trip was asleep, and the place quiet enough to talk in; the evening, I mean, when you arranged for Brander and Carl Taker to help me in later than usual, so that I could try the experiment of sitting out on the piazza till the abandoned hour of nine o'clock.

"I think you are right that a crippled man who may not be able to conduct a severe and active profession, might still be able to compile or even to create a book; say, by inch pieces; or at the pace of that kind of caterpillar (I wasn't an honor man in natural science) which humps itself, and crawls by the span of its head and tail, apparently wasting the whole motive power of its body. But I don't agree with you about the text-book. I cannot think of meddling with my lectures as long as I have one chance left in fifty of getting back to my class-room. I meant what I said—I shall go there in October, dead or living. The idea which has got hold of me is of quite a different order. I enclose two or three samples of it. I am undecided whether to call it 'The Book of Pain,' or 'The Book of the Friends.' I have been a brutal heathen through this whole inferno—rebel to the experience from Routledge River to the Styx; I don't for a moment profess to have developed either Christian grace or pagan philosophy out of it. I have developed nothing but the power of fight. That doctor of yours came again the other day (he commands my confidence, by the way. He is what Goethe called 'A Nature'), and he told me that my militant disposition was the best hope I had—I think he said the only one. Therefore I admit that I am the last person to be prating about the polite acceptance of pain and its value to the human character, or the suffering world. Nevertheless, I have got so far as to see that some other man, more amenable than I am, more patient, more de-

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vout, more docile to the spiritual agencies—perhaps some fellow who never had gone in for athletics, who couldn't row, nor ride, nor golf, nor sail, nor break himself to chips on a gasolene machine—such a fellow, I can see, might find out some day, when things had gone particularly well—suppose, when he had slept a good six or seven hours the night before—that among his friends, among his best friends, we will say, he had quite unconsciously to himself begun to count the angel Pain.

“Tessa has finally carried her point about the telephone. I dread the racket, and there are some other reasons why I have held out against it so long—but I have succumbed. It went in the day before yesterday; as far from me as possible, in the side hall by the piazza door. At this particular moment she is testing the wires by inviting Yewserk to supper. One aspect of the telephone situation we all overlooked—Trip. Yesterday he called up the president of Routledge in person, and demanded to be told whether, being the son of a professor, he couldn't skip and enter college senior year. This afternoon he rang up the metaphysical chair and requested the company of its fox-terrier to lunch in the go-rash with Philos. Philos? Oh, Philos—friend! Philos is the gleam in my darkness; he is the (the pen was drawn through the word) unspeakable comfort of my incarcerated life. Trip is more thoughtful of me than he used to be; you know that's your doing. I know it, if you don't.

“Most of the boys have gone, of course, and Routledge is a Chinese lantern with the candle out—an electric bulb with the current turned off. Sheffield I have not seen, and I did not suppose that he had been here. Trip mentioned the fact while relieving me of the necessity of eating my ice-cream this noon, that Harry went sailing in a canoe one day; he went sailing with Mommer. The child set forth the circumstance that they didn't ‘cop-size’ this time. Did they ever ‘copsized’ at any time?

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Nobody told me so. I confess the little fellow's talk has troubled me. A good many things trouble me since you went away. Trip tells a queer story—serious, if true. But I have not questioned Tessa. I don't feel that I have the strength to waste if I am to get to work in October. Tessa does not talk much this summer—I mean, to me. I think she has something on her mind. She spends a good deal of time with Trip. You know how charming she looks when she is all mother.

“One thing I cannot coax nor compel within the grasp of my imagination. I am supposed by my friends to have something resembling one, and it has received, perhaps, a fair amount of education. But I *cannot* imagine you in a sailor hat.

“Your grateful patient, and affectionate step-brother-in-law,
MYRTON FERRIS.”

Within the letter was an enclosure containing three or four disconnected paragraphs, which Honoria re-read thoughtfully several times. These were written in pencil and marked, “Extracts from an Unwritten Book.”

“Sympathy is the second luxury which the sick must learn to do without. The first is ease.

“The sick and the well do not understand each other. It is demanding a psychological miracle to expect it.

“The well are not happy unless, as a French writer said of the young, ‘they are enjoying pleasure.’ The sick, like the old, are happy when they are free from pain.

“When the walls of the torture chamber narrow and approach each other by daily stages, thank God, if there is any God left in your philosophy, that this sinister movement is imperceptible.

“I find more pleasure now in a perfectly quiet midnight than I used to find in a gallop across country. I take

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more delight in one hour's sleep than I used to take in 'The Ode to Immortality.' I inhale silence as other people inhale air. I drink sleep as another man does champagne. Who has reduced to its terms the relativity of human suffering? Whoever does will discover the secret of human endurance."

The baby on the nurse's lap woke suddenly and began to laugh. Its wasted little hands darted out to clap and slap the soft cheek bent above it—but, missing the aim, snatched at the paper in the nurse's fingers, and for no particular reason apparent to the adult mind, dropped it contemptuously. Miss Tryde started, but the child on her lap impeded her, and the now agile wind was quicker than she. While she sat disconsolately watching the lost fragment of her letter flutter and fly towards the rail, she perceived the figure of a tall man slanting between herself and it. His long, well-manicured fingers clinched with the wind, and he fought for the paper as if it had been something precious. It eluded him like a conscious thing, rose into the bright air and fell.

"I am sorry," he said, lifting his hat, "but it has beaten me. It is luncheon for the fishes now. I wonder if you don't need yours? You look a little faint."

"You startled me, President Hildreth!" cried Miss Tryde.

She held her hand out heartily above the restless baby; the letter from Routledge lay in her lap, and it, too, began to stir in the mis-

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chief of the wind, which seemed to put a paw upon it.

"You can save this for me, anyhow. It is from the professor—the first I've had. I didn't know he could write letters. So few men can. . . . How long have you been aboard?"

"Oh, I swam up a few minutes ago from the northward," replied the president, taking a camp-stool beside the nurse. He had never seen Miss Tryde at all out of ease before, and for a moment the submerged mischief in his well-regulated nature played in his gray eyes. Immediately it yielded to the perfect manner which is possible only to natural kindness of heart.

"If you can't pardon me," he said, gently, "you might put me in irons as a stowaway. I suppose your authority here is autocratic? Although I got on at the pier in the regular way with the other infants, I must admit that I have deliberately and with malice intent refrained up to this moment from revealing my presence on this boat."

"Why?" asked Honoria, in her direct way.

"Because," he replied, "I wished to watch you."

Not in the least disconcerted, Miss Tryde laughed.

"But, again, why?"

"I wished to see how much you care—really care—for this kind of thing. You *do*, don't you?"

Honoria glanced at the child on her lap. The strange changes of hue that warred within her pupils, and that led one to say, "I do not know the color of her eyes," blended to a velvet dark-

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ness in which she imprisoned an emotion that it appeared she did not choose to release. Hildreth saw this; he often saw it when he was with her; he understood that she distanced him without even knowing that she did so; had she been conscious of it he would have felt it less.

"The babe looks happy," he said. The formal, old-fashioned word brought the swift smile to the lips of the nurse.

"Oh, why *don't* you say baby?"

"Are you fond of children?" demanded the president, pertinaciously.

"Not particularly," replied Miss Tryde. "I mean not in the way some women are—"

"Who would never leave a hotel piazza to do this womanly thing you are doing!" interrupted Hildreth, quickly.

"Perhaps not," replied Honoria. "That is why I am here— See! Isn't this a poor little waif?"

"To my unprejudiced eye it looks like a monkey," observed Hildreth. "But you—" He gazed deliberately at her sober uniform—the striped gingham dress; the long, full, loose apron hanging from shoulder to hem; the severe, mannish sailor hat, set back a little on her hair; the sleeves, as the hospital rules required, rolled to the elbow on her delicate, tanned arms. It astonished him that she could look as she did in what, to his supersensitive taste, was a preposterous costume for this girl. She carried it like a beautiful queen in disguise.

The child began to fret a little, and the nurse

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rose and walked a few paces about the deck till it laughed again. Unconsciously, it seemed, she lifted her head and glanced at the Red Cross flag now snapping in the strong southerly breeze above her. The eyes of the college president followed her movements seriously. It was as if he tried to subdue from his face a certain radical perplexity which persisted there.

An Italian boy musician, who had been admitted to the ship for the entertainment of its patients and passengers, moved up at that moment with his violin and began to play within a few feet of Miss Tryde. A negro child, between two and three years old, had followed the boy, and at the first call of the violin, seated itself on the deck at his feet. All the serious passion of the African race for music, born of a sad, emotional ancestry, and nourished by a harsh infancy, burned in the little negro's eyes. The Italian, in ragged shoes and brilliantly figured shirt pushing from his poor coat, was as serious as the negro; his lips were firmly shut; his eyes, set far apart, were stern. He played like an artist on whose expression the whole world hung—absorbed, submerged. The quick eye of the president appropriated this scene.

"What a picture!" he said, in a low voice. "Considered æsthetically—"

"But I do not consider it æsthetically," interrupted Honoria. "I mean, I don't think of that first. I can't."

"No, I see that you don't, or cannot. Your

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point of view is different from mine. I admit that it may be nobler."

The boy musician, who had been playing rag-time, retuned his violin and with sober, discordant scrapings, struck up,

"I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls."

"Do you never *want* a wider horizon?" asked Hildreth. "Do you not miss your natural atmospheres? Travel, rest, foreign scenery, select society, the delights of what, in the better sense of the word, one calls high life? Would you not care for these things?"

"If I had time," returned Honoria. "You see, I have not."

"You care for this more; as I said, you really do."

"I care for the sick," explained Honoria. "I cannot bear to see people suffer. You know, President Hildreth, it is my profession not to bear it without doing something—without trying to do something to help it."

"Has it never occurred to you," asked the president, "that you might have mistaken your profession?"

"*I dreamt that I dwelt in marble halls,*" cried the violin.

Honoria stood still upon the deck with the baby in her arms. She was not looking at the child; her eyes went seaward, out beyond the harbor lights. The boat was now at her anchorage, where she would remain for the day. Her tug was stand-

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ing by conscientiously. A beautiful yacht blazed by—white, and a racer. She veered to avoid the Hospital-boat, and flung along in the shining southerly, careening far on one side.

“Tell me,” insisted Hildreth, “is there nothing in you that responds to *that*? Would you go on forever—in a hulk like this—towed by a harbor tug?—Did you ever spend a winter on the Mediterranean?”

A smouldering ember flared in Honoria’s placid eyes.

“I used to love yachting,” she admitted. Then, in her professional tone, “President Hildreth, I must excuse myself now; it is time for the sterilized milk.”

The baby in her arms had begun to cry loudly. This disturbed the boy musician. The violin dropped from his chin, and he walked away. The little African toddled after him. Unexpectedly to Hildreth, Miss Tryde resumed her seat for a moment. She lifted the child to her neck, exquisitely stroking and soothing it with the instinctive maternity to which she gave the name of professional enthusiasm; she did this till it stopped crying. Hildreth took the camp-stool beside her.

“There is something I wish to ask you,” she began, not without embarrassment. “It is not easy to say, and so I will say it in the quickest way. Is there any reason behind everything else—any reason he has not been told—why the trustees were not ready to wait a longer time, any reasonable

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time, for the professor to get well? Everybody knows that they cannot fill his chair as he has filled it."

The president of Routledge looked straight at the nurse. After a moment's hesitation, he unlocked his guarded face.

"I cannot deny, Miss Tryde, that the matter of Professor Ferris's resignation was unfortunately complicated."

"I was afraid so," sighed Honoria. "But I must ask one other question."

"Pardon me," interrupted the president, gravely, "are you sure it is best?"

"I think I am sure it is best," Honoria firmly answered. "I wish to know whether my sister—" she stopped.

"I am sorry to be obliged to say," returned Hildreth, "that the wife of our friend has not for some time reinforced his professional career at Routledge. It is generally felt that her influence with the students is not—" He, too, paused. The moment was becoming intolerable.

"Of course," he pleaded, "the academic standards are not those of the world. They might easily be severe. Any little deviation is more conspicuous, less likely to be understood. Mrs. Ferris's instance is exceptional. She is not at all a type. Faculty ladies, as a class, are of quite a different order; in fact, I never knew a case like hers."

"My sister has been accustomed to gayer social circles; freer, in fact," interposed Honoria, loyally,

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"Forgive me," he begged, "and remember that you insisted on the truth."

"I thank you for it," said Honoria, "and I shall remember that I insisted."

She rose, with the baby cooing in her neck, and carried it away. The violin at the other end of the deck suddenly cried out,

"Would I were with thee every day and hour!"

The little African crawled at the feet of the boy musician and worshipped. Something not unlike this crude, if cruel human emotion, moved the cultivated countenance of Hildreth, who stood watching the retiring figure of the nurse. At that moment the baby gurgled and squared off at the sailor hat, which fell, dragged and pounded by two happy little fists, from Honoria's fine head.

XII



THE cosmos stood in the September evening; though tall, it was immature, like a growing girl, or an unconscious feeling. Its long plumes, delicately feathered, trembled in one of the winds which go down with sunset and come up after. It was the autumn cosmos, therefore not yet in blossom; the buds were ripening slowly.

There had been rain in the afternoon, and the invalid professor had perforce come in from the piazza at an early hour. No person had been in reach to help him back; his wife was out for the evening, and he was sitting forlornly in the stout easy-chair, alone, and in the dusk. It was a warm night, despite the restless wind; he would have been glad to get out into the air again, but Tessa had not thought of him, and Brander was off duty for the week, at home; Trip was asleep; the servants anywhere or nowhere, and the house and grounds were still. So was the street, on which the vacation quiet brooded. As he had written Honoria, he sat "inhaling silence."

Now and then a footstep bruised the hot, con-

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crete walk; once or twice wheels set the dust of the road awhirl; these sounds were so occasional and so drowsy that they scarcely arrested his attention, and he was somewhat startled when the branches of the cosmos parted slowly and two hands held them back.

It was the disadvantage of the grown cosmos that it had quite curtained his window, and so deprived him of his limited outlook, but at sundown this objectionable circumstance was reduced to its least importance. There had been one of the vivid sunsets that follow a storm. A band of cool chrome still held so low in the sky that the cosmos feathers were traced tossing against it. On their exquisite outlines his haggard eyes fed with the submissive appetite of those who have few pleasures, and who have learned to make the most of what they have.

Between the dividing cosmos, in the delicate design of that green frame, a woman's face and figure added themselves to the woman's hands. Her smile seemed to float in advance of her, and to enter the room which she could not. He had never seen her smile so happily. The color raced over his pale, astonished face.

"*You!*" he gasped.

"I thought I should find you on the piazza. Aren't you able? Has anything gone wrong? Are you worse? Is nobody looking out for you?"

These questions poured pell-mell from the curving lips on which her always leaping, never-tiring compassion had already quenched the smile.

Walled In

"There didn't happen to be anybody on hand," he confessed. He sat bent forward, looking at her; he seemed, in the dusk, to be—as she had thought when she saw him first—all eyes and beard. His face was struck out only in its values like an impressionist sketch. In the deepening twilight it blurred and made as if it would disappear.

"Wait!" she cried; as if he could do anything else. "I will come around."

The cosmos stalks swung and reunited. The sky was now quite dull, and where she had stood a soft darkness, whether green or purple, gray or black, or all in one, swept through. He heard her run lightly over the piazza. The front door responded softly to her trained and thoughtful touch; her step fell on the two long halls like the velvet shoes of a dancer—she hurried so. She melted into the study. . . . Oh, the quiet of her, the quiet!

It had been too warm for lamps, and on his study-table there was only an English night-candle set in a globe of rose; it gave a small, unreal gleam, and scarcely reached her. As he had seen her first, Honoria stood against the long, thick curtain that shut him out from the life of the well world. She stood in the indeterminate light, half gloom, half glow; and, even as it was the first time, she seemed to hesitate and to be something timid about her next step.

Then she saw that he had risen in his painful way and stood holding out both hands. She took

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them in her strong, soft grasp, and dropped them slowly.

"Sit down," she commanded. He obeyed her without a word.

"I see you are using the English night-lights." She spoke in a matter-of-fact tone.

"They have been the greatest comfort to me. I don't know how I got on before you sent them. They burn all night—no smoke, no gas, no flare—just steady, friendly company. And that pink globe—it rests me to look at it. You remembered how I care for color, didn't you?"

"Will it trouble you if I bring it in?"

Not waiting for his answer, she took the little rose-pink light and set it down upon his bookcase beside him. Without appearing to do so, she had given herself opportunity to see his face plainly. A low, shocked exclamation struggled to her lips, but she bit it off between her set teeth. Before it was necessary for her to speak, Philos barked in, but instantly flung himself upon her with ecstatic cries and whines; she was thankful for the interruption, and utilized it in regaining her composure and that of her patient.

"Go and have some supper," he said, immediately. "You have been travelling all day. You must be tired. I will ring for Ann. Tessa is out somewhere."

"Ann is sitting on the stone-wall with the president's man. I will look her up. She should not have been out of your reach. Do you mind if I take my supper here?"

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"Do I *mind*?"

Ferris swept the magazines and papers from his table, and in the soft light of the solitary candle sat with shining eyes. In a few minutes Ann came in with the tray, and Honoria followed soon. She ate sensibly, like a healthy, hungry woman, and at first she did not talk. The professor observed her closely.

"You are pretty well tanned," he said, as carelessly as he could. He was conscious that he had greeted her with the tremulous eagerness which a small, unexpected pleasure arouses in the sick; and this—no, this pleasure was not small; it had seemed, for the moment, too large for his strength.

"And you are pretty well thinned," she observed slowly. "Haven't slept much, have you?"

"Not very much. The nights have been hot—and noisy."

"Oh, we will change all that. I shall see to everything. I shall look after you, now I am home. You must be better—you *shall* be."

"There isn't much margin left before term-time," replied the professor, mournfully.

"You have no flowers," observed Honoria. "Haven't you had any since I left?"

"Yes—the roses you sent those two times. And Brander has contributed bouquets—phlox and geraniums; some peonies, too, and dahlias. And one day Trip brought me a fistful of autumn dandelions."

Honoria pushed away, and then took away the

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tray. When she came back she went to the window, leaned out into the warm night, and broke a few sprays of the cosmos. He watched her while she filled his vase.

"They are only buds," she said. "They don't mean much. But they will do for to-night. I can't bear to see an empty vase in a sick-room. To-morrow Trip and Philos and I will explore the garden."

"It does not seem as if—" The professor checked himself. He found that he had begun to say, "It doesn't seem as if I needed flowers *now*." Instead, he sat looking at her peacefully. Every nerve of him rested in her presence. She seemed to him the essence, the embodiment of the healing ministry. He felt that only an imprisoned man could understand Honoria; no one else would know what she was; no one else could estimate her. He determined not to let her know what he had suffered since she had been away; he would not draw on the funded wealth of her lavish, her wonderful sympathy. She was more spendthrift of it than any person he had ever known.

"You have your composite look," he said, lightly. "Did the slum babies appreciate it?"

"Poor little wretches! I have brought you some pictures of them. See! Here are some of the nurses, too."

"You among them?"

"Unfortunately."

"In a sailor hat?"

Maled In

"Alas, yes! But nobody else minded. The others liked it—all except you and me."

She uttered the words carelessly enough, but when they were spoken her manner changed at once; she began to ask him professional questions. In the soft penumbra of the rose candle, in the still room, in their separateness from common life, its pleasures and its perils, nurse and patient chatted quietly about symptoms and exercise and treatment.

"First and most, I want to know how you have slept—all about it," she demanded. "That is the important thing. All the rest will come right—is coming right. I can handle everything else so as to help you; I am sure of it. I am not going away again; not at present, I mean. I can see that I made a mistake; I ought not to have served on the Hospital-boat this summer. I will try to make up. . . . I will, indeed! I ought not to have left you at all, just now. You will forgive me—won't you?"

"If you put such preposterous questions I shall do some preposterous thing. I didn't have two hours' sleep last night. . . . I haven't the nerve of a prize-fighter. How would you feel if I broke down?"

"I should feel that it was my fault," returned Honoria, contritely. "Tell me—do you dream? Do your dreams give you distress? Does the brain keep suffering on?"

"Oh, I always dream. And they are never pleasant ones. I am trying to lecture, you know, and the boys won't stay to hear me. Or I climb the

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college steps on my hands and knees because my back is broken, and the trustees stand at the top and lock the door. The students are having a rush on the campus. Half a mile away I hear the college yell. Lately I have a respite from the college. I am always doing something in the line of athletics that I shall never do again, and the curious thing is that I know all the time I shall never do it again—and yet I do it. I took a cruise to Bar Harbor in a ninety-foot Herreschoff last week—no, a hundred and twenty over all. Last night I rode my wheel to the profile and back. I walk long distances—thirty miles or so; and I feel the wind on my face, and the blood beats in me. Sometimes it is golf, and I win the cup. Then it is that devil of a machine!”

“Does something always go wrong?” asked Honoria, in her low voice, packed with pity which she seemed determined should not escape.

“Oh yes, always. In the crisis I always give out. The yacht goes into the breakers because I cannot hold the wheel. The bicycle turns under me because my knees are weak. When I have walked a certain distance I tumble down. Then I hit a fellow with my driver and knock him flat because my arm is numb. The machine—oh, the machine dashes me to perdition four nights out of seven.”

“You have talked enough for to-night,” said Honoria, gently. “I will send in Ann with your milk and the things you need. When you are

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ready call me. I will sit in the study and read aloud to you. It is still very early. You may get a few minutes' nap while the house is so still. Ann shall watch for Tessa to tell her."

Ferris did not answer; he did not trust himself; the tears of lonely and neglected suffering had started to his burning eyes; he was glad that Honoria could not see them; he hid them on the warm protection of one of the spaniel's long, silk ears.

Honoria came back presently with a reading-lamp which she carefully shaded from him. She moved the pink candle to its accustomed place and silently arranged his table for the night.

"Have I forgotten anything?" she asked.

"Nothing. You never did. Don't think I don't remember that you have been travelling! You ought not to be doing this. I ought to forbid it."

"If you can sleep even a few minutes," suggested Honoria.

"Sometimes I think I would sell my soul for half an hour's sleep!" cried Ferris.

"The price is too large for the occasion," said Honoria. "It is cheaper for me to sit here and read to you till Tessa comes."

She smiled and took up a book. Ferris was grateful that she received his outcry so lightly; if she had taken it as seriously as he had uttered it, he did not know what might have happened; at the least, he would have miserably regretted it, as a man always regrets an exhibition of weakness in the presence of a woman whom he reverences.

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"You don't care what book?" asked Honoria, comfortably.

"Anything; it doesn't matter."

"Did Brander never read to you?"

"Oh, he tried. But it was really impossible—poor Brander. You know a man may go through our institutions of learning from kindergarten to the post-graduate and not know how to spell or read."

"Yes, I know. You want something in long sentences—something a little ponderous, or even stately?"

"Yes. Something that goes on a good while without punctuation."

"Macaulay is too well written, I suppose? And De Quincey?"

"I should be admiring or criticising the style."

"I thought so. Suppose we try a *very* old-fashioned novel—something of Scott's?"

She chose *The Antiquary*, and began to read, the sensitive modulations of her voice subdued to gentle monotone. Within half an hour she perceived that the sick man was asleep. Honoria extinguished her lamp and slid away to watch for her sister, to whom (when Tessa came home, escorted by the new professor) she related the circumstances at once.

"I thought, Teasie, dear, we might between us keep the house quiet—couldn't we? He needs it more than you can understand."

Tessa flung two lace arms about Honoria's neck.

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"Oh, whatever you say, Honor—I don't mind what—if you'll only stand by, and take care of him."

"I will stand by," said Honoria, soberly. "But you, Teasie—so must you."

"I am sorry for Myrton—he's a poor, old dear. But I detest sickness," complained Tessa. "It wears on me so—you have no idea. You can't imagine how it depresses me."

Into the grave play for the great stake which was before them, nurse and patient now threw their united forces. Honoria flung herself into the attempt to regain the points he had lost during her absence. She observed like a surgeon; she brooded like a mother. Not an hour of her waking day overlooked his smallest need. His least chance of recovery was her thoughtful opportunity. Her sympathy and devotion outran his most silent want. He was half aware that she had a certain professional pride or ambition about his case. If the other half of his consciousness electrically touched upon her personal kindness, the current did not connect. Both the man and the woman were absorbed in the serious importance of the crisis that was at hand. Perhaps sometimes he wondered how many women intelligently understand a man's career so as to be useful to him at the decisive moment of fate; but neither of the two had the nerve or inclination for any emotional waste outside of their common battle.

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Honorio fought like a general for his recovery; he obeyed her like a soldier. The term approached, the college opened, the day for the first lecture was set. Both had ceased to talk about the tremendous significance of the experiment.

Honorio tried to explain it to Tessa; but Tessa said, "Oh, if it weren't this, it would be something else! I'll try to be good, Honor. I don't mean to be a little beast, you know. But it's always something with sick people! If it isn't one emergency, it's another. There's always a crisis going on. . . . Why, yes! Certainly I will go in and sit with him a while, if you want me to. I'm very fond of Myrton. I wouldn't have you think I'm not sorry for my husband."

Now, Tessa, as we have said, believed that she was born to be happy, and her happiness took the form of an episode which, as the demons willed, occurred upon the evening before the lecture. Mrs. Ferris, in short, "forgot." Sheffield and the new professor and a few people came in for an impromptu musicale, and the piano rang through the house. To Honorio's distressed remonstrance and entreaty, Tessa, for once, was obdurate.

"I forgot," she said; "I tell you I forgot to-morrow was the day. I don't know how I came to—that lecture has been hanging over this house like a thunder-cloud all the fall—but I did. Of course, I can't send them off, now they're here. Even you must see that, Honor."

"But think what depends on it, Tessa! After

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the first time it would never be so hard for him. It is just here, just now, just this minute that so much is at stake—his whole future, perhaps. . . . Tessa, how *could* you?"

Honorina trembled with her helpless pity and pain. The moment was acute to her. She had often witnessed the deep, speechless indignation of physicians when the life or cure of a patient for whom they had fought, was sacrificed to family stupidity or indifference. Now she felt that she understood it.

"I'll send them off early," said Tessa. "And I'll stop the piano pretty soon."

In the morning, the professor, white and weak, staggered into his carriage and was driven the little distance to the college. The October sun was shining happily in his old lecture-room, and it was full to the doors. His students were all there. He looked pathetically at their eager, affectionate eyes. When they saw his shattered face every lad of them rose and stood to receive him with bowed head. The president was on the platform and came down the aisle to meet him. Leaning on Brander's arm, the professor walked between his two friends, "the small and the great," and so slowly reached his desk.

There—having asked the pardon of his students, like the gentleman he was, for a seated lecture—he read and spoke to them for half an hour; and then his face fell forward on his hands.

"He has fainted!" said the boys. His mind had

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not fainted, but his nerve and muscle had. They helped him from his lecture-room, and he did not enter it again.

Honorina walked in the garden. She, too, could not sleep. She walked without sound, and she thought without words. Such was her turmoil that she felt chilly in the warm October night, and drew the skirt of her black dress from its silk lining over her head and shoulders. This made her look like a nun. At the windows of the professor's room the blinds were closed; through their green slats bars of dim light fell upon the cosmos.

"The rose candle is lighted," she thought. The scent of the cosmos blossoms filled the autumn night. It was as if they poured their souls out in some intense emotion. Crimson and lake and white, they leaned towards the study with half-closed eyes.

It was a still night; it seemed to Honorina that she could almost hear the call of the distant river which had risen under a recent rain. Her ears were overstrained, and she heard everything. Suddenly there smote upon them that which caused her to clap her hands to her head as one does before an unendurable sound, or one too sacred to be overheard. She turned, fled into the house and up the stairs to her sister's room.

Tessa, in her lace-trimmed nightdress knotted with crimson ribbons, was sleeping peacefully. She sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes like a child

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with her pretty knuckles when Honoria's breaking voice smote in upon her dreams. Honoria wondered what they could have been.

"Tessa? *Tessa!* He is sobbing down there alone. I was out in the garden. He does not know I heard him. . . . Oh, Teasie, do go to him. Do go down and comfort him. He may need care—he may be very ill. There is so much you can do—nobody else."

Tessa listened sleepily. She yawned and lay back and flung her ringed hand upon the empty pillow beside her.

"Why don't you go yourself?" she asked, good-naturedly. "Put on your cap and apron and go. It will be perfectly proper. If you think I am really needed, you can call."

Honoria turned without a word. She dropped her sister's hand, which, in her agitation, she had caught and held, went across the hall into her own room, and shut and locked her door.

When the resignation of Professor Ferris went in and was accepted, his wife said that it was very depressing, but she exhibited, for a time, a personal concern in his fate which he had so long since accustomed himself to do without, that it rather surprised than touched him. Tessa was even conscious that her sporadic attentions to him were not as pathetically received as they would once have been. Myrton did not show that disproportionate gratitude which she had been taught that

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any especial expression of interest in him should arouse. He returned a gentle politeness, distinctly lacking, she felt, in the key of adoration which for eleven comfortable years had sung the song of marriage to her. Tessa was perplexed. She did not know what to make of it. It occurred to her, in an inspired moment, that Myrton might become capable of indifference, or even distaste such as she had sometimes observed in the husbands of other women at stated periods in matrimonial experience. Tessa went so far now and then as to flirt with her husband. He responded languidly. After a while Mrs. Ferris tired of this attempt at conjugal coquetry and returned to her natural occupation of being happy anyhow, with anybody, at any cost, and all the time.

Honoriam, in the passionate patience with illness which is as much a gift as an acquirement, went quietly on with her voluntary duties in the study, where, after the experiment at the college, the professor was reincarcerated. To that tragedy neither had ever referred. Only once he said,

"Everything is over now."

And cheerily Honoriam answered, "Everything is just begun."

"I don't understand you this time. I flatter myself that I generally do."

"Why, now that worry is off—all that big load—we can set ourselves to getting you better in a natural, comfortable way—not forcing everything.

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That is always such a hindrance. Nature hates to be hurried."

He smiled to humor her. He could not anæsthetize her heroic hope with the smothering sponge of his despair. Let her have the comfort of her sweet delusion.

It was a brilliant October, scarcely less wonderful and sunful than that of a year ago, and even warmer. Towards the end of the month several really hot days came scorching down upon the valley. Brander and Honoria got the professor out again upon the piazza, and it was so warm that Honoria hung a rolling porch screen to shelter him, and once more, observing but unobserved, he saw the students tramping by. Honoria noticed that he could now watch the boys without apparent emotion—the boys, no longer his. The afternoon was blurred with a smoky haze, and towards sun-fall the heat became so oppressive as to be almost sinister. Every window in the house was flung up, and every inmate of it left it, moved by a common discomfort, and sought the outer air. The servants wandered restlessly in the yard. Trip played fretfully with Philos in front of the house. Tessa and Honoria sat on the piazza with the invalid. Now and then Tessa ran to the telephone, or flitted about the garden; she wore her butterfly dress.

The same thought occurred to her husband and her sister: "She is expecting some one to call." But neither gave words to it.

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Honorina sat quietly on the piazza steps. She had the attitude of a scholar at his feet, and this amused him.

"Usually I have to look up to you." The patient smiled at the nurse.

"Don't you think that a curious sky?" asked Honorina, abruptly.

"If you'll take Trip off that telephone pole I'll tell you," uneasily replied the professor. "See! He is half-way up. Ever since the thing came into the house he has been possessed over it."

"Oh no," said Trip; "I can't come down for any woman. I'm a lineman."

"I thought you would be a professor, like Papa?" suggested Honorina.

"You bet I wouldn't! I'll never be anything with trustees tagging after."

"Very well, then. Be a lineman, if you like. But I am chief of the division. You are needed at another post."

She held up her beautiful arms.

"This one's good enough for me," objected Trip. Suddenly his obstinate little muscles yielded and he slid down.

"A man would rather kiss you, I guess," said Trip.

When Honorina came back with the boy, the attention of the whole household was arrested by a sullen, coppery color that seemed to have taken but an instant to form in the northwest. As one looked it extended and rose into the upper air,

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where a huge cloud that nobody had noticed till that moment charged upon it head first. The two contended for an indeterminate time, and then the cloud, black as the pit, rode over the metallic yellow light and extinguished it.

"I smell sulphur!" cried Tessa. She ran from the garden and cringed against her husband, who put his arm about her and patted her.

"There, there!" he said.

Before he could add a word a blasting storm burst upon them. Its suddenness, its severity, above all, its untimeliness, were nothing less than terrifying. Dashed by the wind, against which one felt that the garden had found no time to protect itself, stalks and shrubbery went flat. The cosmos broke near the root and fell, bruised and beaten. The great elm in front of the house beyond the low stone-wall rocked and groaned. Servants ran up and down dashing in blinds and crashing down windows. Philos cowered to his master. Tessa pushed Trip into the house, and herself fled to her husband's bed in the study alcove, where she hid her face in the pillows from the lightning. The storm, like all unseasonable electric storms, was malignant and incalculable; there was something so vicious about it that even Honoria, who had what is called "thunder-storm nerve," said uneasily to her patient:

"It is pretty bad. You must get in at once."

"Don't shut the door," pleaded the professor.
"I will sit just under cover. I want to watch it."

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She did not gainsay him, but gave him her strong arm silently, then pushed in his chair across the threshold and stood behind it. The night was now riven with thunder, and rain sank like a cloudburst. The spaniel crept to his master's neck. Honoria's face, flared out by blue and crimson lightning, had an elated look; she seemed remote and solemn; Ferris moved once and looked at her; then turned away.

"Is Teasie all right?" he asked.

Honoria nodded; she was about to speak, but a flash, pursued by a crash, tore the words from her. There was a brutal roar, and when the reverberation died the rain began to cease. The wind did not. It was now quite dark and blowing wildly.

Honoria got out upon the piazza and put her hands to the sides of her eyes. Her black dress flapped and twisted about her.

"A bough on the great elm has broken," she said. "It has fallen; I think it has broken the wire. I'll go and tell Tessa. Now that the shower is over, she might happen to use the telephone."

She ran in and quickly out again. Ferris had got to his feet and was outside, leaning on the piazza post. The loose screen was rattling against him.

"See!" He pointed over the wall where the mutilated elm groaned. The broken wire hung swaying. The wind was still so strong that the sundered end dashed to and fro madly. Everything was wet—the wall, the pole, the tree, trunk,

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leaves, boughs; everywhere the wire met a dripping surface. While the two stood straining their eyes to stab the formidable darkness it corruscated before them. No electric wire entered the house, but the connection in the college building was not far away. Sparks and spurts of flame jetted viciously from the telephone wire, now a living and death-dealing thing.

Moved by the excitement of the storm, and impressed by the spectacular beauty of this after-scene, Ferris turned to say to Honoria, "I never happened to see anything like it. Effective, isn't it?" when the idle words rose into the cry which mortal emergency wrings from the soul of the coldest sceptic, and the professor was not that.

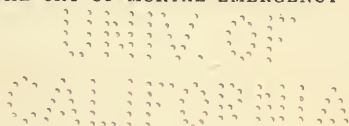
"My God! *My God!*"

Scudding through the darkness, in his little white piqué suit, Trip ran slyly. His curls tossed in the wind. In his eyes, if any one could have seen them, lurked a furtive look, determined and defiant and pleased—his mother's look, when she meant to make herself happy, nor chose to count the cost.

The crippled father struggled and fought his way down the piazza steps and against the resistance of the wind. Tessa ran out and stood screaming with her two hands before her eyes. But Honoria was in advance of them by fifty feet. Ferris saw her, tall in her black dress, dashing down upon the child. Her strong hands clutched Trip by his white shoulder and flung him behind her. She



THE IDLE WORDS ROSE INTO THE CRY OF MORTAL EMERGENCY



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stood in a shower of fire. A gust snatched up the wire; it swayed over the wet wall and seemed to stretch itself to reach her. In the corruscation Ferris saw her still, exalted face for an instant—and then Honoria fell.

XIII



IN the study alcove it was dark; even the rose candle was quenched. Ferris lay with hands pressed upon his staring eyes, but the terrible retentiveness of the retina reproduced the biograph of the evening; it was as if its successive scenes were etched upon the optic nerve with steel dipped in a powerful acid. The storm raged in his blazing brain; the thunder, and the infuriation of the wind; the blue and crimson lightning dashing out Honoria's face; the groaning tree, the swaying wire, the broken bough—the child running into a fountain of fire, and then the long, leaping steps of the girl in her black dress, hurling away her life as a thing not worth a thought to save the little lad. Trip's mother stood screaming and did not stir—no, not for the child of her body did Tessa forget herself. Now the butterflies on her dress turned phosphorescent, and seemed to scintillate over her from head to foot. Ferris remembered that he had pushed his wife aside in an instant of sickening scorn as he got past her with slow, laborious steps and out-stretched arms. Trip ran into them sobbing and scared. With one

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gulp the father had tossed the boy back to his mother, and himself limped on to the silent figure, face down upon the grass.

Honorina lay ominously still. He could find neither breath nor pulse in her; yet like those of old in the Hebrew story, the smell of the fire seemed not to have passed upon her. Unscathed and beautiful, she had sunk with her head upon her arm.

He must have gone to his knees beside her, for he remembered splashing into a rivulet or pool of water; he remembered that he put his arms beneath her neck and shoulders and tried to raise her. Curses on his lost muscle and manly nerve! The crippled athlete rained anathema on his physical weakness. Once he could have lifted her splendid length, her vigorous body, as he would snap a flower from its stem. Without a sense of effort he could have broken her from the roots of death.

He hoped that no one had heard him groaning there beside her, for, before he could call for help, voices and arms of men rang and pushed between himself and her. Brander and Sheffield lifted her and carried her up the steps; when they got her to the light and saw her quite plainly they removed their hats, which they had pushed on the back of their heads. They carried her to the sofa in the hall and laid her down. Some one threw a coat over her, and Tessa, with a pinched face, brought a slumber-robe, or blanket, and, at her husband's command, loosened Honorina's dress. Ferris seated himself on the end of the hard sofa, and tore off

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her shoes and began to rub her feet with his trembling hands. The servants brought cold water and hot bags, and then stood crying. For a burn, for a faint, for a wound, for any other accident, there would have been first aid knowledge in the household to meet the moment. Fate had selected for Honoria the one catastrophe before which the group of educated people were as helpless or as stupid as the child or the dog.

Some one had sent a student passing in the street for the doctor, who on his way met the president and brought him in. Hildreth looked once at Honoria, strode up to her imperiously, then seemed to recall himself and stepped back.

"Out of the way—all of you!" said the old doctor. Everybody obeyed but Ferris, who could not. He found himself going contemptibly faint, and laid his head against the wall and turned his face away. Honoria's feet still lay in his hands; through their silk stockings he felt their mortal cold. Was it the hallucination of his own racked and blighted nerves that the ice he held, still chafing it automatically, melted a little beneath his touch? Then he heard the doctor saying, crossly:

"Give me all the air there is, and some women—and let us alone! She's coming out of it. . . . I *think*," he added. For the old doctor was gray with experience, and did not risk his words. He had already begun to give Miss Tryde the treatment which is used in the resuscitation of the drowned.

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At that moment a voice shook in the professor's ear: "Come with me. You will fall if you remain here any longer. That would make everything worse—for her. I will help you. Let us go."

An arm got around him, and he saw that it was Hildreth's. The face of his friend was fixed and dull. The mind of Ferris swayed as the broken wire had swayed. Suddenly it seemed to touch the surface of some stormy idea which set it aflame. Through the current of his being there ran a shock that did not smite, but curiously uplifted him.

"It is true," he thought, "the man loves her."

Now it was deep in the October night, and he lay in his dark room with his hands upon his eyes.

For the excitement and effort of the evening his body was already receiving its punishment; but with that of his soul it appeared that he had yet to reckon. His whole being had become one unanswered, perhaps unanswerable, interrogation. He pleaded the lack of physical nerve to deal with it. But the utter truth took no excuses from him. A sincere man, if his sincerity is reinforced by imagination, is far more severe with himself than with others, and Ferris had reached that point of personal experience where no one can hide his mistakes behind his afflictions.

The silent revolt of his crippled life—its arraignment of fate, its covert distrust of the arbiter of destiny, its despair of the future, and its conflict

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with despair slid from his mind as secondary matters in the relentless revelations of that night.

Something was subtracted from his ideal of himself. . . . What then was he, if not the man of his own dreams of a man? These had been high. God knew, they had never sunken to the level where a lower soul wars against flesh and blood; it was against the principalities and powers of a fine nature that his contending force had been turned in the spiritual struggle. Coarse pleasures, low temptations had averted their faces before his clear, unseeing eyes. Simply said, he had always looked over their heads. His splendid body had not stooped. His manly soul had no remorse. Each, after its kind, was athletic.

It is difficult for a man of the lighter world to comprehend the standards of conduct which, in these fanes of study and thought, may regulate a scholar's life. Indeed, one should rather say, instincts of conduct. Ferris had never been aware of any particular credit in morality. It had not occurred to him that anything else was thinkable for a decent fellow. He had the plain domestic virtues of the average American husband, and added to these the refinements of a nature whose distinction had taken itself for granted, when a moral problem was presented to it.

His knowledge of the world was not narrow, but he had not lowered his colors to it. He had looked upon the accepted facts of modern society with cold impatience, such as he felt when he read a

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decadent novel; in a sense treating them both with the distaste induced by tainted fiction. Moral error had somehow always seemed unreal to him. Moral beauty, like poetic or artistic beauty, had struck him as one of the great facts of life—in short, the greatest.

He had wooed his wife with a will of iron, won her with a heart of fire, and held her with a velvet arm. He had loved her and her only for eleven loyal married years. He had never cultivated so much as a friendship with any other woman since the day when he had asked Tessa to marry him.

Honor! Oh, *Honor!* But Honor was not "any other woman." No woman resembling her had ever crossed his life. She was as far apart from the lorelei who vex the hearts and stir the pulses of men as the flora of another planet from the cosmos that lay beaten by the storm outside his window. In the wet air the breath of the bruised blossoms worried his senses without pleasing them that night. He was so spent that he could not bear any of the beautiful and irresponsible influences. In Retszh's illustrations the roses that the angels throw at Faust change into red-hot coals. Ferris turned his face on his pillow, drew the sheet over his head like a cowl, and withdrew into the monastery of his own soul.

His thoughts argued with the image of his wife. Into the depths where his accident had hurled him Tessa had not elected to follow. She had danced on the edge of the pit wherein he writhed. Nothing

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could change that. It was as it was. In the great emergency of his life—in the greatest this side of disgrace or blindness or mania that can befall a man—his wife had politely and pertinaciously failed him. He had long since ceased to delude himself about Tessa's affection for him. It had never occurred to him that he could cease to love her.

Honor! Oh, *Honor!* Into the abyss where he lay broken, Honor had clambered down. She had crept to his shattered life and solaced it. She had tied the cords of her compassion about his deserted soul. . . . She had drawn him—ah, how gently!—into mid-air and mid-light. At the edge of the gulf he saw her standing—her arms, stronger than the arms of women, quivering with his dead weight. Until that night, until that hour, he had never recognized how strong they were. In all the removal from common conditions through which he and she had passed, in all their separateness and solitude, in the strain of his weakest moment—or of hers—Honor had never for a troubled instant lost her poise.

If ever this noble woman erred it would be through the noblest in her; it would be through her exquisite sympathy with the suffering of another. Not that, not even that, had misdirected her. He could not recall an escaping eye, a rebel tone, a careless word that any man of common sense or modesty could have read for other than it was. He might have been a patient in any of her hos-

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pitals—for aught he could have claimed of her, she might have shown to any other wretched fellow the immeasurable mercy which she had poured on him.

. . . "God Almighty bless her for her sweetness and her strength!" So prayed the crippled man, whose troubled creed had never reached the pass of arguing that "God was out of date." This outcry of the spirit calmed him indefinitely, as any honest reaching after higher things must calm a sincere soul. It seemed to him that he sent this prayer after her as he would have sent a substitute for his presence. . . . Honoria, suffering and weak—Honoria but now recalled from death—and he not there! If he could have stayed to see her conscious eyes lift, and know that his returned her one wave of the ocean of her pity for himself—but, at the crisis of her fate, like a woman, he must swoon! She had missed him; perhaps she had even needed him or wondered if he did not care. . . . Hildreth had gone back to her.

At the recurrence of his friend's name and vision to his mind, Ferris experienced a strange emotion which for the moment deviated the course of his feeling. As soon as he could reduce this to words he found himself saying: "Very well, then. And why not?" Presently he remembered that Tessa had suggested something of the kind to him a good while ago. He had paid no attention to it at the time; regarding what she said as the idle chat of a woman whose mind is disproportionately occupied

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with the relations of the sexes. His thoughts leaped a long way ahead.

"Nothing could be more desirable for her," he said, half aloud.

In this conventional phrase he hid a qualifying or critical impulse that seemed to fly to it for sanctuary.

No, Honoria was its sanctuary—Honorio herself. All his thoughts put on a sacred garb when they ran to her. In the dark it was as if she laid white hands upon them, and said: "Look. I am refuge to them. I will shelter them and nurse them. They shall not become sick thoughts. I will see to that." Then it seemed as if he spoke with her, spirit to spirit, there with the width of the house between them, in the long, wind-beaten night:

"You must understand what the shock was. . . . You had given your life for my child." He could have sworn that he heard the pliancy of her wonderful voice, taking its practical, professional tone:

"Why, of course. It was inevitable. There is nothing in *that*."

He groped for his matches and lighted his candle, and fingered in the drawers of the stand by his bed till he found what he wanted—the composite photograph. He held it to the rose light. The picture showed soft and appealing in the small, warm gleam. Its yearning eyes, its resolute mouth, its all-womanly and all-merciful identity seemed in the dimness that was neither bright nor dark to be one

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with hers, He put it back gently and shut the drawer. But he was no woman, this crippled man, and the athlete in him rose suddenly and duelled with the invalid. His feeling for Honoria turned about and struck out at him. Gratitude? Reverence? Admiration? Brotherly affection? Consciousness of his infinite obligation to her? Belated recognition of his pitiable dependence upon her? The homage which any man must give to her? Colored by the delicate idealization that such a man as he must offer a woman such as she?

"What is this?" he asked his candid soul.

In the morning he tried to get up, but could not, and accepted the circumstance with exasperated patience. Fitfully and fretfully attended by his wife, he listened to her prattle, which concerned itself with Tessa's conviction that if Honor would only exert herself and show a spark of interest, she could marry the president whenever she chose. As for that dreadful business of the live wire, Tessa would have it out with the telephone corporation. It ought to be in the contract if people were to be electrocuted in their own homes. Honor? Oh yes, Honor was all right; a little tired, Tessa admitted, but that was all; the shock was not severe; she had sent word that she would soon be down. Honor had such remarkable health; she shook off everything.

"I call myself a well person, thank goodness!

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But she'll get over it before I shall," insisted Tessa.

While they were speaking of her, Honoria came in; she walked slowly, with heavy steps. She and the professor clasped hands, but neither spoke. His eyes fed upon her pale face. Trip bounced in and dashed upon his father, whose shaking arm closed around the boy.

"Go," he said, "and tell Aunt Honor—" but he faltered. "It can never be said. But you will understand."

"Suppose we take that for granted," said Honoria, in the matter-of-fact tone that he knew so well; the tone with which she was used to quell all forms and phases of agitation in her patient. "We will talk some other time, but not to-day. I did not come to talk; I came to read to you a little while."

"If you think me such a thankless, such a self-sodden brute—" cried Ferris, angrily. The color drove over his faint face, and Honoria laughed; she had perhaps accomplished some occult, professional purpose in so savagely arousing him. With determination she took up the first book she could lay hands on. It proved to be Alger's *Friendships of Women*, and she opened it at random—the book was marked—and began reading by the marks:

"A man's best female friend is a wife of good sense and good heart, whom he loves and who loves him."

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At this point she interrupted herself to say, more gently, and firmly still:

"Believe me—please. This is the best thing for me, too—it really is. It never tires me to read, and I need diversion this morning as well as you."

"Oh, let her do as she wants," said Tessa, yawning. "I have the marketing to do, and somebody must sit with you. Honor understands herself, Myrton. She always did."

Tessa called Trip and went away, and Honoria took up the book again, and read:

"Friendship can be carried, without . . . peril, to a degree proportioned to the nobleness and consecration of the parties."

"No affection, save friendship, has any sure eternity in it."

"Please repeat that?" asked Ferris, unexpectedly. His heavy lids narrowed over his listening eyes. Honoria re-read the paragraphs, and then turned her page. He did not interrupt her again, but lay thoughtfully observing her. An expression of escape grew upon his face, and a certain grave illumination slowly followed. The relentless question of the night recurred and floated away from his troubled mind upon a sigh of poignant relief:

"What is this? Why, it is friendship! So Petrarch felt for Laura—Michael Angelo for Vittoria—Châteaubriand for Recamier—and so a thousand upright men for high-minded women, and will feel, world without end."

"Amen," he said, solemnly.

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"Did you speak?" asked Honoria. She lifted her calm, unconscious face from the *Friendships of Women*. The book seemed to cling to her hands.

The season hardened early that year, and Ferris adjusted himself with such philosophy as he had compassed to the deprivations of the winter. These, for the invalid, were steadily reduced by the presence of Honoria, who fought for her case with the exalted patience which distinguishes woman from woman more than other quality except tenderness. Tessa tossed every care upon her sister. Even her daily attendance upon her husband began to shrink; and he soon ceased to count upon her elusive presence; Tessa did not find a sick husband entertaining, and Honoria was a graduate nurse. The situation, to Tessa's mind, was clearly foreordained for her release from monotonous responsibilities, and she made the most of it. For her own interest and ease, Tessa narrowed the space between the converging lines on which Ferris and Honoria stood. In the Day of the Revealing, it will be made known how often the great crisis of feeling or conduct between man and woman could have been prevented by the chartered third.

"With such a voice—do you never sing?" the professor asked the nurse one day. She had been reading aloud to him for an hour, while Tessa was skating.

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"I used to sing," said Honoria. "But only a little. My voice was not trained, like Tessa's."

"The house is still. Would you mind singing to me—just once?"

"Why, of course, if you wish it," answered Honoria. She went into the drawing-room, leaving all the doors open, and tried the piano. He heard her sweep a few deep chords; it seemed to him different from any playing he had heard. She had no more than the average amateur training; but her voice poured like wine into the cup of feeling and filled it to the brim. Ferris listened with closed eyes while Honoria sang:

"Our life, our life is like a narrow raft
Afloat upon a hungry sea.
Hereon is but a little space,
And all men, eager for a place,
Do thrust each other in the sea. . . ."

There he lost a few bars, but soon regained the words:

"Our life, our life is like a curious play
Where each man hideth from himself.
'Let us be open as the day,'
One mask doth to the other say
When he would deeper hide himself—
'Let us be open as the day'—
That he may better hide himself."

"Would you mind indulging me once more?" asked Ferris, abruptly, when Honoria closed the

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piano, with a finality that admitted of no argument, and came back.

"I have never seen you in your uniform. I should like to do so."

The corners of Honoria's mouth twitched with a little amused smile.

"That I may better hide myself? Or perhaps reveal myself? Certainly, if it will entertain you."

That evening, when Tessa was at home, Honoria slipped into her gown, cap, and apron, and came into the study with a tray in her hands. In her long, white outlines, with her gentle motions she looked like a statue of pale wax.

"It fits well," said Tessa. "But to think of making such a guy of one's self!"

Ferris did not say anything at first, but gravely regarded Honoria. Then: "How are you catalogued?" he asked. "Grace, Mercy, or Peace? You might be either, or it might be all. In any event you are composite, as I have said before."

He took the photograph from the drawer and showed it to his wife. But Tessa lifted her level brows.

"That's just a common nurse!" she complained. "And Honoria—why, Honoria comes of a good family. For my part, I can't see the least resemblance."

"I should think that quite possible," replied Myrton, locking the photograph in the drawer.

Encouraged by Honoria, Ferris that winter worked upon his book—timidly at first, then de-

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terminatedly. This tentative clutch at the lost joys of the intellectual life achieved two things for the imprisoned scholar. It placed Honoria, for the time, something less in the foreground of his sensibilities. And it shortened the ellipse of the Circle of Ice. One day a blue-bird knocked against his window with its beak. And another day he looked, and the mountain snows were a torrent in the streets. The reluctant ice gave upon the roaring river, the students sang *Gaudeamus igitur* at night; Philos tracked the counterpane with little, shivering, drenched feet; Trip, with rubber boots that always had a leak in them, thumped about the halls; Tessa had her canoe painted; and it was spring.

One yielding, shining day in April Mrs. Ferris was obliged to assume the care of her husband—Honoria having gone to the city for the day. Tessa brought her unanswered letters, and sat down at the empty study table. Myrton was in the stout chair, where he could see her. Tessa wore something blue and brilliantly becoming. He observed her with the bitter admiration of a man whose wife seems to have ceased to love him. She finished and sealed half a dozen letters, and piled them on the table before she spoke to him. Then she said, carelessly:

“If I went to mail these, you’d be all right, wouldn’t you? Anything I can do?”

“Nothing, thank you. Unless you find Philos for me.”

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"He's hidden under the couch. I whipped him for muddying my dress. There!"

Tessa stooped, putting one round arm beneath the couch, and dragged out the dog. As she did this, something dropped from her pocket. Neither of the two noticed it till she had left the room. Then Ferris picked it up. It was a note addressed in his wife's hand-writing, unsealed, and, in fact, it had fallen from its envelope.

Tessa returned in a short time and began to peer about the study with an anxious tangle between her cool eyes. Then she saw Myrton sitting straight and stiff, with his shaking hand held out.

"Here it is," he said.

Tessa clutched the note instinctively; then recalled herself, and dropped it on her husband's knees. Her face had hardened and sharpened.

"Keep it, if you want to. I suppose you have read it."

"I never read a letter of yours before, Tessa, in all our lives. It seemed to me that the time had come. Yes, I have read the note."

"Well?" jeered Tessa, defiantly. "What of it?"

"I am still your husband," answered Myrton, quietly, "however unhappily for you. I have rights in your conduct, if no room in your heart. I must ask you—once and for all—to stop this thing. It is discreditable, and it can't go on."

"Do you mean to insult me?" shot Tessa. She did not lose color, but before his rigid eyes the

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flesh of her cheeks seemed to sink in. "I haven't done anything wrong!" she cried.

"Good God, Tessa! I don't know what you *call* wrong. Short of the seventh commandment—I don't stoop to imagine that my wife—*my wife*—" He gasped, and stopped.

"There is such a thing as common prudence and decorum," he suggested.

Tessa sat down on the edge of the bed, and regarded the toes of her walking-boots sullenly. She did not answer. Was that Myrton speaking? It sounded to her like the voice of a stranger met in an uncomfortable crowd.

"You will get yourself talked about," he was saying, drearily. "You have already done so—"

"The president is an old poke!" interrupted Tessa. "He is nothing but a diplomat. I am a child of nature."

As if he had not heard her, and it is doubtful if he had, Ferris proceeded heavily:

"Your cousin is what is called a gentleman, and he is a physician of repute; he would not let you go too far. Yewserk has come to his senses with his chair. But *this*—"

He tore the note into a fringe, and handed it to her.

"I have expressed my wishes," he said, coldly. "You will please to follow them."

The window was open, and they could both hear the river hurling itself against its banks. Then that which Tessa had counted upon happened.

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Myrton's voice melted like a cake of ice sucked into the gulf stream.

"Tessa!" he cried. "Tessa! Try to trust me! I am a man—your husband—I know what is right for you to do. Listen to me, Teasie!"

"I think I have listened quite long enough," said Tessa, chilling in her turn. "I can't see what I have done to be abused like this. It is my nature to be amused. You know that, Myrton. Didn't I tell you that when we were engaged? I *have* to be amused. I should go crazy moping here—you sick all the time. I must be happy. I always have been. And I've *got* to be."

"Can't you be happy in some creditable way?" demanded Myrton, wearily. Tessa rose and went to the window-sill, where she sat down; her little feet swung impatiently. She sat so that she could see the river, which Myrton could not see.

"How is anybody going to know when she is married that she will never care for anything, nor anybody, but that one man? For my part, I don't see. I think marriage is founded on a wrong idea, and people are finding it out. Everybody wants something they haven't got. . . . Look at you and Honoria!" she finished in an argumentative tone.

"*What?*"

"I don't see any such tremendous difference when you come to look at it. I don't think you're in a position to take high and mighty ground with me."

"Tessa!" cried Ferris.

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Tessa cringed. She did not know which was the more terrible, Myrton's voice, or Myrton's face. Since they had been married she had never heard, she had never seen anything at all resembling either. For the instant she felt the crude fear of the erring woman before the male creature to whom she has bound her life. The sex instinct of ages was in her when she began to deprecate her husband. Perhaps, besides this there was something more, or even something higher and better.

"Good Heavens, Myrton! Don't go on like that—you'll make yourself down sick. You know I am a vicious little beast when I get going. . . . If you didn't stir me up, I shouldn't blaze out so. I'm sure I didn't mean anything so very dreadful—you ought to know I didn't."

"Take back what you said," commanded Ferris, quietly.

"I've said a good many things," parried Tessa, turning her neck deliberately.

"*Take it back!*" thundered Ferris.

"I'll take back anything," said Tessa, quickly, "rather than to see you excite yourself so."

"You sha'n't take it back for my sake," persisted the husband. "You shall take it back for your own sake, and her's—and for decency's sake."

Up to this point Tessa had preserved an enviable composure. Now she began to cry weakly:

"Oh, if you mean about Honoria—why, of course I'll take it back. I was so mad I didn't know what I was saying—you upset me so," sobbed Tessa.

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"Anybody 'd be a goose to say anything about *Honoria*. Or you either, for that matter, you poor old thing. Why, it—it would be perfectly ridiculous!"

Tessa's sobs snapped into hysterical laughter. But Myrton did not smile.

"Go on," he said, sternly, "that isn't enough."

Tessa stopped laughing and crying. She mopped her wet face and turned it, reddened and swollen, to meet the volcano that was her husband.

"I'll say anything you please, Myrton, about *Honoria*. I don't know any more women like *Honoria*. I never knew her do a single silly thing—and more men have broken their hearts over her than any of us know—*she* won't tell of them. I would risk Honor through anything. Why, I would trust Honor in hell fire—or you either, for that matter," added Tessa, with dramatic conviction. Now that she had begun to fill the rôle of confessing wife, she rather enjoyed doing so generously.

"Never mind me," said Myrton, with an expression of disgust, "I don't count in this thing. But when I think what we owe to her—you and I—and Trip! If it hadn't been for her—" he choked. He had risen, and panting, towered, above his wife. "Come! If there's any doubt about this—if you are posing—if you don't recant with absolute sincerity—she shall leave our house at once."

Maled In

"Good gracious, Myrton!" cried Tessa. "Then who would take care of you?"

"Is that why you apologize for this—this insult?"

Tessa did not immediately answer. Her slippered feet stopped swinging. She seemed to be listening to the river which roared in the pauses of their talk.

"Myrton?" Tessa's shrill voice moderated to a slow undertone. "I am not like Honoria. Perhaps I am not even what you think I am. I do foolish things. I have foolish feelings—wrong ones, if you call them so. But I wouldn't do such a thing as *that*—I never got so low!"

"I beg your pardon, Tessa," said Ferris, quickly.

"I think too much of Honoria," added Tessa, turning away from the window.

The two looked at each other in the helpless silence of the husband and the wife who see the narrow path of daily life gape between them into a cañon. It occurred to Ferris that the moment was irretrievable. What occurred to Tessa he felt that no one could guess. All he could think of to say was:

"Very well, Tessa."

And Tessa went away.

When Honoria came home from the city that evening, she was met by Ann. Although it was not late, the professor was trying to sleep, and did not wish to be disturbed. Mrs. Ferris was out, and Honoria sat down rather disconsolately with Trip and Philos. She felt perplexed, and a little

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pained. Then she remembered that she had no right to feel pained. She went out into the garden, when Trip had gone to bed, and walked alone. She put the width of the garden between herself and the house, at which she scarcely glanced. She felt rather than saw that the study windows were dark.

It was a gentle night with summer at its heart. Presently she went into the gray grape arbor and sat down awhile. A virginal moon gave a delicate whiteness to the budding shrubs and trees, and indicated rather than defined the garden paths. Down these, with a ringing step, the tall figure of the president eagerly approached her.

"They told me you were out here," he began. "May I come, too?"

"The professor is not as well as usual," answered Honoria. "He is trying to sleep. We had better go into the house where he cannot hear our voices."

XIV



ON the hillsides of Thibet there exist hermits who may be called the saddest in the world. In caves closed to air, to light, to warmth, they elect to immure themselves for life. Choosing his fate that he may be canonized, the ascetic huddles in his living tomb. The stones are cemented; the lock is turned. In the top of the cave appears a small aperture, large enough to admit a human hand. Twice a day, through this opening, the wretch is fed. A slight tap upon the surface causes a slide to stir; through the narrow space wasted fingers receive parched grain and water.

A traveller, visiting one of these hermit settlements, asked for proof that below his incredulous eyes a live man was walled in. The guide tapped upon the sliding panel, and tapped again. After some delay it opened slowly, and a hand, gloved so that even the light of heaven should not touch it, trembled out into the air, groped about for a moment piteously and then drew back.

Myrton Ferris, lying motionless, with his arms flung straight out upon his bed, as if they had been

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nailed there, thought of this immolated creature. With the vivid memory of a reading man, he reproduced the tragic scene as it had seared his brain upon a page recently turned and almost forgotten. Into his fate, not a voluntary, but a defiant victim, he had been thrust by that power not himself which has been known—who shall say by what mysterious psychology?—to secure and hold the affections of an invalid prisoner. Many a bitter rebel, in the hermitage of a crippled life, has become a happy devotee. Of their gentle number Ferris was not. As he had said of himself, out of his misfortune he had chiefly developed the power of fight. As long as the most elusive hope of health had cheated him he struck out. Now it occurred to him that his fighting days were over. "Unable or to move or die," he sat entombed. The key had snapped in the lock of his life. He had been fed—he perceived that he had been kept a living man—by one human soul.

In the isolation where a man's wife elects to leave him famishing, shall he refuse the only hand that feeds him? Ah, what a gentle hand it was!—faithful, white. His had groped after it, trembling; yes, and gloved. Its strong fingers had met his with the beautiful unconsciousness of a sacred mission; they had not faltered; they had not failed. He understood now—he understood at last, that this pitying hand was all which interposed between himself and famine.

And now he must repulse it, he must thrust it

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off. It was a woman's hand. A starved man cannot take the bread and water of life from a woman whom he may not—what? What may he not?

The merest wretch would not refuse affectionate gratitude to a sweet woman who had done what she had done for him—no, nor for the half of it.

Now, common honor will always clarify our troubled emotions if it is given the chance, but so will common sense; and that of the professor came to his aid, if not to his relief. He perceived that whatever he did, or did not, to his last breath he should bless the hour when first he saw Honoria's face; and that he should tell her so if she wished to know it. So much, clearly, was his right and hers. Friendship, he observed, had rights as well as love. . . . Friendship? Was this friendship? . . . *This?*

Her step was light for so tall and strong a woman, and he heard it brushing the grass and gravel, creeping timidly away from him into the garden. He could not deceive himself; he knew that she was hurt. His heart arose to heal the wound that he had given her. He put his hand upon the closed blind—why, a whisper would bring her. But something stronger than a man's will held him back. Then he heard the hurrying footfall of his friend—that other man who could feel what he would for her, and express it without lost time.

The two had passed the corner of the house,

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thoughtfully silent, for his sake; he knew when they came in softly and went to the long drawing-room, where he could not hear their voices. He looked at the sinuous silk cord of his electric bell. A touch would summon her. She would come—oh yes, she would come. But that which is stronger than a man's longing held him back.

It came on to be well past midnight, nearly two o'clock. Tessa had come home and gone to bed. The house was so still that it was solemn. The dog in his basket seemed to sleep without breathing.

A man's only formidable foes are they of his own nature; and Ferris wrestled with his, and knew that he fought to the finish that night. He was as solitary as if he were the subordinate of some vast and organized power which had set him in a dangerous post, and bidden him stand and take what came.

Now he remembered that there was something he had to deal with. There was a question, and—no, he had never answered it. He had eluded it in some pleasant fashion; he had met it scornfully; he had eyed it curiously; he had treated it carelessly. Now it turned again and rent him,

"What, then, was this?"

This biography is not written for those who can smile at the position of an honorable man who has never thought it possible that he could love any woman but his wife, and to whom the mere pros-

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pect of such a moral mischance comes blinding like blue lightning. The professor, as we have said, was one of the straightforward, home-keeping, home-loving men. His moral fastidiousness was a matter of course, like his daily bath. The moral dust-cloud into which he had now emerged from his sad but placid marriage was as startling to him as it would be to a high-minded woman; as it might have been to Honoria herself if one could suppose—but no, no, no! No man could, for the width of his wildest moment, suppose *that*.

As it had been with many other troubles of his life, the shocked distress in which he now found himself had been brought about by his wife. Tessa's vicious chatter had started inexplicable consequences within him, like her shrill voice at the long-distance telephone coming out three hundred miles away in a message to her cousin in New York.

Ferris might, he recalled that he might, have gone on lolling before a serious situation for an indefinite, and therefore possibly a dangerous time, but for the brutal vulgarity of Tessa's language when she hit out anyhow (as Tessa always did) to defend herself. Her recantation, he saw, had nothing whatever to do with the matter. She could not retract, nothing could retract the effect of what she had said upon himself. Be the consequences what they might, they must now take their appointed course with him, with her, with Honoria. Ferris felt himself answerable to himself alone for

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the definitions and decisions of that night. No woman could intermeddle with a man in a moral emergency such as he now recognized that he must face; and he must face it like a man.

"Not like a mummy," he said, falling back upon his old phrase. He could not play the invalid before his exigency. He could not swathe his conscience from it. He could not indulge in one delicate delusion to pad his nerves. At any cost, for his own sake, for his wife's, and for that dear woman's sake, he must have the truth out of the innermost cell of himself, and call it by its honest name.

With the sincerest intentions, he set about this dutiful task. He meant to perform it thoroughly. He meant to investigate himself—intellect, feeling, and will—like a psychologist. He thought that he could classify himself like a scholar before he brought himself to account as a man. Many a moral decision has been muddled by cloudy thinking. It may be as important to be intelligent as to be right. Ferris purposed to treat his perplexity like a man of intellect.

But he was very tired. It was now far in the morning, and he had not slept. The sick man's concentration began to waver. His thoughts slid from the grooves on which he had started them. They began not to seem of as much consequence as they were a little while ago. What, in fact, was all this tragic introspection about? What had happened except that Tessa had been more indis-

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creet than usual, and had lost her temper in trying to defend herself? Why should he arraign himself, or wound Honoria, for so commonplace a trifle? . . . Honoria? Oh, Honoria! Her sweet stateliness, like that of her noble name, stood before him gravely. He remembered how, in all the innocent familiarity of nurse and patient, she had carried herself in his sick-room; like a sexless symbol of the healing ministry, remote and sweet. Little kindnesses that she had done him—no one else remembering that he needed them—beat like a bell in his brain. Little tendernesses that she had shown him (no doubt she had shown as much or more to those wretched babies in the Hospital-boat) throbbed like the aorta at his heart. Immediately his being seemed to be full of her mercy. She interpenetrated him like the circulation of the blood. What he thought, what he felt, what he did, he perceived that he could not dissociate from her. He must count upon her personality in his life as he did upon the pulse in his wrist. It was too late to undo that. There was no help for it now. Nothing remained except to do what was right. Suddenly, while he was reasoning in this conscientious and leisurely way, Ferris felt himself smitten by an unseen, unknown force. Out of his night's reflection and emotion it had come up behind him, so to speak, and thrust him upon some mysterious danger. It was as if he were hurled upon the very thing which he sought to avoid—rather, it was as if he hurled himself

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upon it, as a careless man falls upon a broken current in the immense overplay and underplay of the electric system. It was as plain to him as a fountain of fire that he was courting mortal peril, as his child had courted death. What was this upon which he dashed himself— Gratitude? Affection? Reverence? Brotherly regard? The starvation of the desolate sick? It was the great live wire of the world.

There is always an element of relief in arriving at a clear, moral definition, whether for good or ill. The professor's imaginative temperament, fed by the love and the study of art in language, gave to the metaphor upon which he had tripped the nature of argument. It seemed to him that he might have gone on deluding himself any length of time for the lack of just some such impressive words. They conveyed to him the idea of danger, and that was enough. With a scorching candor he began to discuss the situation with himself. He saw that all his life he had cherished a certain moral complacency. This in a moment, this in an hour, had shrivelled within him. Who was he that he should trust himself or pride himself above other men—fanning the comfortable delusion that he was not as they?

Like other men he had now met his moral emergency. It had come to him late, midway of his calm and studious life, midway of his once ardent and still tender affection for his indifferent wife.

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Sauntering through the Indian summer of feeling, he had been whipped to his senses by a cord of fire. There was a certain bitter comfort in remembering how this little, flaming line overran and underran the whirling world. He saw men and women walking with clasped or sundered hands, forever going in tempted pairs, forever seeking or shunning danger, forever calling it by sweet, false names until too late. It did not need romance, nor incident, nor accident, nor the complications of the brilliant world to imperil the eternal two.

Who was safe? What heart was secure? What hearth? Not the humdrum home. Not the dull, domestic car fastened to its daily track—even through this there ran the parallel line of the electric risk.

Life was interlaced with the mysterious danger which besets the woman and the man. Fair or foul, fit or unfit, strong or weak—who was insulated from the hidden current? He thought for the first time with a certain pity of Tessa and that entangled lad.

He lighted his candle and glanced at the shelves of his library, where the classic dramas and fictions returned his look significantly. All these records of human story throbbed with the same fire. The same disaster devastated or threatened them all.

There were the great French novels, the German, the Russian, surcharged with their beautiful or their evil forces. There was the fiction of our own day and tongue—not classics now, but “sellers”—less

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great, if not more clean. Was the planet mad, that it had gone on singing of its deadliest danger and dancing to it? In the mechanical world recognized perils are surrounded with safe-guards—the red light, the barricade. Literature, the drama, society, music—these should be the sanctuaries of the soul, not its death-traps. But what of that? Should he, Myrton Ferris, go down like any weak, low fellow to an easy, because a natural, descent? The misery of the spinning world hums forever in the ears of its Creator, but the great cry of the tempted rises above that. It is of less consequence to suffer than it is to sin. Once more, what then? With his personal share of the universal lot, what was he to do?

“There must be some way,” said Ferris, half aloud, “to meet the facts of the system of things. At least, it is always possible to do what ought to be done. Any man knows that. Better men than I have done it—and worse.”

But he was very tired. His sleepless eyes strolled about the room. There was the rose-gleam of the candle—Honorio's candle. The air was timid and sweet with the breath of arbutus—Honorio's flowers. On the table he could see the open page from which Honorio had been reading to him. It was the book about solitude, by the author of the book about friendship. The stand by his couch was eloquent with all her little ministrations for his comfort at night. She had never allowed him an anodyne. For him and with him she had fought

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those beasts of Ephesus which attack the insomniac life. With a certain fright on his face he scrutinized his empty study. Everywhere, always Honoria! His rooms were as levitant with her as they were with air. His debt to her was an immeasurable, and alas, an inevitable thing!

With an effort he staggered to his feet and tried to pace the room as a well man will do when he is agitated past endurance.

"It must come to an end," he said. "It must all stop." Then there drove upon him the absurdity of these words. How was anything to stop? Should he insult her by an explanation? Could he turn her from his house? His weak feet betrayed him, and he staggered back to bed. The actual helplessness of his position had never presented itself to him before. The body of the crippled athlete writhed before it. A well man could put the width of the continent, the span of the world, between himself and the woman who might become too dear. Nothing would count—nothing.

What was a career? A well man could toss it away in a moral emergency. The price of a soul is large, and it might be worth any cost to do the hardest, safest thing. But he? What could *he* do? The simple road which thousands of troubled men had taken before him was not for him to tread.

For the first time Ferris perceived that with pain and disability the tragedy of an invalid life has scarcely begun. Its snares may be too fine for the clumsy feet of health, and its moral gulfs may

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reach to the bottomless pit. If he had been a well man he would not have been forced upon this crisis. It was his misfortune that would block his way out of it. The image of Honoria floated before him, unconscious and compassionate. Could he say—could any man say to a woman, "You have saved my life, my reason, my hope of recovery; you have been the angel of my house: now go from it. I have accepted your devotion, your sacrifice, your infinite thoughtfulness; now I thrust you off, homeless, unconsidered. You have done everything that is high-minded and womanly. Accept my unmanly ingratitude in return. Lest I suffer moral discomfort for my own selfish soul's sake, I dismiss you from my hearth and from my life."

"I would die first," said Ferris, setting his teeth.

It was now three o'clock, and the birds were singing in the dawn.

"If I could get a little sleep," he thought, wistfully, "I might know better what to do."

In the morning, Honoria came in timidly. He thought her pale, and found her silent. He could see that she avoided being alone with him. They did not talk. Tessa was there more than usual. The president came in to call, and the trustee who had been the professor's warmest friend upon the board—he who was known as Gamaliel L. Strong. Ferris gathered his shaken strength and talked with Mr. Strong.

Then Trip thumped in with his arithmetic to be

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shown a sum. From these exactions and exhaustions, Honoria made no effort to shield her patient. In the evening she came in as usual, yet not as usual; he could see that she did so reluctantly.

"Tessa is going to the concert. She asked me to come and sit with you."

The simple, formal words seemed to stand before her like a shield. It was as if it covered her fair body from brow to foot, and she held it out as the great Venus with the broken arms once held hers when men called her Victory instead of Love.

As it was the first time that he saw Honoria (and again that other time when she had been on the Hospital-boat), she stood in the half-light that was neither gloom nor glow. And now, as then, her face was modelled from a strong shadow, and her features he could not see. Across the dimness and stillness the two looked at one another. For the first time since he had known her Honoria showed evident embarrassment.

"May I light the candle?" she asked.

"Why, of course. Anything you wish."

She held a match to the wick, and he saw that her hand trembled—her strong hand. She stood in the rose gleam uncertainly.

"Aren't you going to sit down?"

"If you wish it."

She slipped into the stout chair and looked aimlessly about her. Her fingers strayed to the book

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about solitude by the author of the book about friendship.

"Shall I read to you?"

"No. I thank you—no."

"What *can* I do for you?" asked Honoria, with a little catch in her breath.

"That is just what I am trying to decide," said Ferris, outright.

In a moment the blameless intimacy of a year seemed to have evaporated. The residuum of this bitter constraint was left. He felt sure that Honoria was aware of it when she spoke.

"You are suffering?"

"Oh yes."

"You did not sleep?"

"Not much."

"Something has happened?"

"Yes; something *has* happened."

"Can you tell me what it is?"

"The only real difficulty is that I cannot tell you what it is."

"Then Tessa was right," said Honoria, gravely.

"Tessa? Has Tessa told you?" Ferris brought his lips together. "I should not have believed it possible!"

"Oh, Tessa always tells me things," said Honoria. "At least she always used to. She has grown secretive lately. It has troubled me. I have tried to keep her confidence. I don't mean about you, but other things, other people."

"Tessa cares for you," explained the husband,

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"more than for any one, I think, except her child."

Honorina made no reply.

"She trusts you; she would be guided by you. I tried to influence her about an important matter, and I failed. I aroused her displeasure, and she—"

"Yes," interrupted Honorina, "she told me what she said."

"She told you—what she said?"

"She apologized," said Honorina. "She said she felt she ought to, but all the same the thing is done."

"It must be undone!" exclaimed Ferris, eagerly.

"How?" asked Honorina. She turned to him an unsmiling face. Her composure had assumed the character of sternness. Suddenly this gentle, this tolerant woman, the tenderest he had ever known, had become a being to placate.

"You are hurt!" he cried.

"A little," admitted Honorina.

"I would rather have died," said the man, deliberately. "It would be better if I had. It would be best for everybody—there is still time."

"But you are going to get better!" cried Honorina. "I was going to help you, to save you. I meant you should get well, and now—" She put her two hands upon her eyes; she could not bear to look at him. "Don't!" she pleaded, "*don't!*"

She rose and flung open a window. He could see that she struggled for her composure before

Walled In

she turned. "You are faint. Do you want the brandy?"

Ferris shook his head.

"I do not want anything but what I cannot have—your care, your kindness. You see, I have depended upon them a good while. I am afraid," he selected his words slowly, "I am afraid I should find it hard to learn to do without them."

Honorias tall figure seemed to sink inch by inch into the cushioned chair.

"Professor," she pleaded, "I never thought of such a thing in all this while. I never *thought* of it."

"You do not need to tell me that!" cried Ferris.

"I never thought anybody could mistake anything," Honorias quivered. "I am so used to taking care of sick people."

"I should as soon mistake the Infinite Mercy," said Ferris, solemnly.

In the small light of the candle they regarded one another miserably. In Honorias calm eyes the sweet unconsciousness that had answered his extremity so long assumed a light veil like the piece of gauze that a woman ties about her face. Through this exquisite cloud she looked at him timidly.

"If I should go away—not to-morrow, not this week, I do not mean too quickly—perhaps if I went back to the Hospital-boat, do you think you could manage to get along without me? You might grow a little stronger before I left you."

Now Ferris put his hands before his own eyes.

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All the savage impulse of a man to have the truth out of the soul of a woman whom he must not love—all the more because he must not love her—possessed him at that moment. It would be so easy to speak; it might be so comforting to hear. He felt that it was the most dangerous moment of his life. At the same time, he was curiously conscious how men of the world would regard such a situation, or the character of the emotion which it created in him. He recalled incidents that he had heard—not in detail, but in effect—the talk of clubs—the standards of gay life. For an instant his rebel heart arose and demanded what he called his right; but that which is stronger than a man's rebellion, or a man's rights, held him back.

"Honor!" he whispered. "*Honor!*"

It was as if out of his weakness and her sadness he appealed to something greater than his longing or her leaning, to something larger than the fate which was thrusting them apart. It was as if he pleaded with some unknown, mysterious power, mightier than the tempest in him, or the forced calm in her.

"Honor!" he repeated; "tell me what to do!"

"There is never any way," said Honoria, "except to do what is right. . . . But how can anybody tell . . . for any one else?"

At that moment a gust from the open window quenched the candle, and the rose light went out. Where she sat, so far from the lamp upon the study table, it was quite dusk. Ferris could scarce-

Walled In

ly see her outlines, which seemed to be escaping him. For a wild moment his submerged nature rose. The consciousness that one is beloved is more precious than the expression of love, and he who would have flung his body to any brutal death before he would swerve in deed, trembled before the exquisite approach of an unacknowledged feeling. He found himself lashed to a position ancient as human life, and as compact of danger. Mad words tempted his lips, but these refused them. He looked at Honoria more entreatingly than passionately. It was as if he appealed to her to protect him from himself, even as he challenged his sane self to protect her from his alienated one.

Honoria looked at him gently. She leaned a little away from him.

In the dark their human hands met, as if they had been spirits—and dropped apart. Like a spirit she eluded him—and he heard her shut the door. Broken words floated back to him.

“Sleep! Sleep!” he thought she said. “That will help you most of anything.”

Heaven honored her benediction, and with its cadence chiming in his ears, the worn man suspended the conflict which the strong call victory instead of love.

He woke, renewed and resolved. The April morning filled the room. It was now the third week of the month and an early spring. Between

Walled In

him and a happy sky the leaf lace of the elms wavered in a light, alluring wind. Indefinable, immature scents of budding flowers exhaled from the garden. The river ran so quietly that he could not hear it, but the gleam of it beyond the president's house added the touch of liquid blue for which every inland scene seems to pant. Ferris dressed and looked abroad. There was a certain spiritual quality in the day which delicately stimulated him. His expression was high.

"What she said is true," he thought. "Nothing matters except to do what is right."

Honorina did not come in, and he did not send for her. After breakfast he rang for his wife. He was sitting in the easy-chair. The room had been put in order. The bed was made, and smooth. Tessa sat down on the silk counterpane.

"Well," she said, "what is it?"

"There is something I want to say to you, Tessa. Would you mind shutting the door? I do not want to be interrupted."

Tessa's mouth stiffened into its hard mold. "But I don't want to be scolded."

"Nor do I want to scold you," said Myrton, gently. "I want to love you."

Tessa stared at her husband without a smile.

"What for?" she asked.

"Let us talk a little, Teasie. I will try to make you understand. All I want is to talk plainly and quite kindly."

"Very well," said Tessa. "Of course Trip would

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be sure to come in. If he didn't, Ann would, or even Honoria."

"Honoria will not come this morning," answered Myrton.

She got up and closed the study-door, and when she came back he noticed that she held something black in her hand. It was her marine-glass that she used at York Harbor. She went to the window with it and adjusted it carefully to her eyes. He saw that she was looking at the river, as she often did.

"There is nobody there yet," she said. "The boys meant to open the season this afternoon. The water is heavenly."

She hung the glasses on the hook at the side of the tall bookcase, where she usually kept them. Then she came back and sat down on the edge of Myrton's bed.

Tessa was dressed in green. Her skirt was short. Her dainty feet were stretched out and crossed below it. He noticed that her little scarlet jacket with its facings of green cloth hung across her arm.

"Golfing to-day?" he asked, kindly.

"Oh, I don't know," said Tessa. "I haven't made up my mind what I shall do to-day. But I don't mean to waste it. I mean to enjoy it, somehow. It's a great day, Myrton. Don't you know? It seems as if you *must* be happy."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Myrton, unexpectedly. "Tessa, don't you suppose we could be happy together—you and I—after all? I mean,



HE SAW THAT SHE WAS LOOKING AT THE RIVER



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happier than we have been lately. Because, you see—" His sentence fell, unfinished. He was disturbed to find how embarrassed he was when he tried to declare himself to his wife. Tessa flung her graceful body back against the pillows of her husband's bed and settled herself as if for a long talk.

"Of course, I know what you mean," she admitted.

"Tessa," demanded Myrton, suddenly, "do you want things to be different? Do you *want* to love me?"

Tessa was silent. She twirled her wedding ring, and the diamond above it caught a fleck of sunlight and flashed in his face.

"Sometimes I do," she answered, slowly.

"Do you want me to love you?" persisted Myrton.

Tessa's long, black lashes lifted swiftly. A startled look darted from under them. This crept back like some little wild thing to its covert.

"I always supposed you did," she said, bluntly. "Don't you?"

Ferris did not immediately answer. His wife's head turned on his pillow, and he felt that she watched him stealthily.

"You know that I didn't mean a word of what I said yesterday," she exclaimed, with her natural impatience. "I have apologized to Honor. I told her that I was ashamed of myself."

"Honor is going away," observed Ferris, quietly.

Walled In

"Going *away*?" Tessa sprang from the pillow and sat up, vivid and straight. "But I cannot possibly have Honor go away. We cannot spare her. I am very fond of Honor. I should miss her—and so would you."

"That is not the question—whether I should miss her," said Ferris, slowly.

"But I could never take care of you—not even if I tried my best!" cried Tessa. "It isn't in me."

"That is not the question, either; if there is nobody to take care of me—it makes no difference, Tessa; Honoria is going away."

"And you are going to let her?"

"Yes, I am going to let her."

Ferris enunciated these words with deliberate distinctness. They fell upon Tessa's ears like the ticking of a clock. They seemed as irrevocable as the passing of time. Tessa was not stupid, and she understood. It was not necessary for Myrton to admit it. She understood why Honoria was going away. The startled spark in her eyes wavered to a flicker of mortified vanity. It had always been her pride that her husband was the most incurable lover she had ever had. She had never believed it possible that she could really lose him. All the arts and instincts of the woman who lives on admiration rose within her. She felt that she must keep him at whatever cost.

"Are you going to fall in love with her?" she asked, in a grieved undertone.

Walled In

"God help me—*no!*" said Ferris, in a lower tone than hers. He staggered up from his chair and over to the couch. On the edge of it he sat down, and before she could speak again he had taken his wife into his arms. His agitation was great.

"Tessa," he pleaded, "Tessa, let us help each other. Give me your confidence and I will give you mine. I don't want to keep anything from you. I will tell you every thought, every feeling I have had—if you would care to have me—if you will love me, Tessa, as you used to do. Don't you see, my girl? It isn't easy for a fellow—sick all the time, and nobody to care. If we should go on as we have been, if we should go on as we are—how can we tell? I suffer a good deal, Tessa; you don't understand that. I have been pretty desolate. You don't understand that."

"No," said Tessa. "You see, I never have been sick."

"There is nobody I reverence more than I do Honoria," Ferris hurried on. "I can't help that. You must understand it. She is the first saint I ever knew who was a real woman."

"Yes," said Tessa. "That's the odd thing about Honoria. She's a mixture of both—like changeable silk."

"She has carried herself in a hard position," Ferris proceeded, deliberately, "in a way that I don't know how to describe. She has never made a mistake—not once. She has been just as loyal to you as she has been kind to me."

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"Nobody understands that better than I do," interrupted Tessa.

"But I don't think, Tessa, that I ought to be obliged to depend upon another woman—not my wife—for so much kindness, so much care. I don't think it is best," he added, with the incisive, masculine emphasis which generations of bewildered men have put upon that convenient word.

Then his manner changed. His natural candor, his conscious innocence, his real affection for his wife poured like molten metal into words that, it seemed to him, must take lifelong shapes and stand like iron statues in the deserted garden of their married happiness.

"Tessa, listen to me! People can't treat marriage as they do anything else in the world. It isn't a flirtation, it is an obligation—don't you see? There are those who call it a sacrament. No matter how it disappoints or—hurts, one has to make the best of it."

"Oh, I suppose so," said Tessa, drearily.

"And there is no such thing as doing that unless there is some common ground to get on." He enunciated these simple words distinctly, as he would to a child whom he was trying to teach an unwelcome lesson. "The only thing I know that will make a man and woman happy, and keep them so, is love, Teasie. You and I have never thought much—not enough—about these things. Marriage may be like the soul in the old theology they used to preach to us—it must be born again to

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live. Love is all there is, Tessa. There is nothing else in this world. I've found that out; haven't you?"

Tessa pushed away Philos, who had sprawled upon her lap, jealously pawing at the master's hands which covered hers. She did not answer.

"But even," continued Ferris, less eagerly because less easily, "even if love should cease, duty would not. Duty would have just begun. The determining not to be wrong—to be right, and do right, whether one is happy or not—that is always possible."

"You ought to have been a minister, Myrton," suggested Tessa, with one of her sly smiles.

Myrton looked down at the slight creature whom he held in his trembling arms; he felt half strangled. Suddenly that which he had purposed to do appeared as preposterous as it would be to teach Philos to scan an Anglo-Saxon poem. The remoteness of his wife's nature from his own had never seemed so great as at this moment when he was trying to reclaim it into approach. Then he remembered that he had chosen Tessa. She had not chosen him. He had persisted, and she had yielded. He had loved, and she had replied. For their mutual mistake and misery, he must be answerable; he was a man. If he wore her like a girdle of thorns for the rest of his life, what of it? Men had done as much and more before him.

"Myrton," said Tessa, abruptly, "do you re-

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member how many times you offered yourself to me?"

"A good many, wasn't it, Teasie?"

"Five," replied Tessa, proudly. She counted off her fingers. "And this makes six." She ended with the marriage finger, where the diamond burned above her wedding ring."

"Kiss it, Myrton," she demanded. It was one of the pretty little tricks of her honeymoon—Tessa had been a bewitching bride—and Myrton's heart fused within him like hardening slag tossed back into a furnace.

"Teasie, Teasie!" he cried. "We *did* love each other. Can't we try again? Let us begin all over. It is hard to be married—and not to be happy, Teasie."

"Yes," said Tessa, "it's hard all around. You haven't had it all to yourself, Myrton."

"Come!" commanded Myrton, in a vibrating voice. He held out his arms from which his wife had slipped back upon the pillow while they were talking. "Shall we make the best of each other, Tessa, after all? Will you try to love me, Teasie—as you used to do?"

"Yes," assented Tessa, slowly, "I will try. I am a vicious little beast, but I will try. . . . You are a good man, Myrton. You are better than I am."

"And about that other matter," Ferris pleaded, gravely; "you will do as I asked? You will put a stop to it? Of course, you see—"

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"Yes," replied Tessa, looking straight before her out into the April day. "I see. I will do what you said. Only, Myrton, I shall have to see him once, just once, to explain, you know."

"Has it gone so far as that?" thought Ferris. But aloud he only said:

"I am sorry, Tessa. I should have hoped that were not necessary."

"And I promise you, I *promise*," vowed Tessa, "that I will never have anything more to do with him. I'll stop, Myrton, I will, indeed. I won't flirt any more. I am sick of it. I will settle down and bring your tray, and pour out your medicine, and all that. . . . Why don't you kiss my ring?"

"I did," said Myrton.

"Once isn't enough," said Tessa. His lips brushed the ring, but crushed her mouth which Tessa lifted suddenly. He could not remember when his wife had offered to kiss him before. He held her as a man holds something precious which he is determined not to lose. Neither spoke. He thought, "God help us!" But what Tessa thought he knew that he should never know. It occurred to him that God did.

"Myrton," said Tessa, "I used to love you very much—I did, I *did*! And I've been a little beast since you've been sick. . . . I'll make Honoria teach me how to treat you decently. . . ."

She kissed him and left him, and then she came back and graciously suggested that he should kiss

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her dimple, "as he used to do." She said she was tired out and must have the air. She put her arms about his neck and rested her chin upon his hair, and so she left him in earnest, and he heard her singing in the hall.

Presently he saw her through the window going down the walk with the scarlet jacket on her arm. Honoria went with her, and they talked together for a little while, and Honoria came back to the house. Then Trip ran out, bareheaded, in his blue blouse, and called, "Mommer! Mommer!"

Tessa turned and waited for him. Ferris saw her clasp the child and kiss him several times, and then Trip, too, came back, and Tessa walked down the long, warm street between the rows of college elms.

The morning broadened and brightened. Honoria came in quietly and asked if he wanted anything, but she did not stay. She, too, it seemed, went out. At noon Tessa had not returned, but the circumstance was not noticed by any one except her husband. It came on to be half-past twelve o'clock, and he began to be restless and watched. Beyond the president's house, where the Doric columns stood white in the noon, the river quivered. As Ferris fixed his eyes upon it his shoulder hit the marine-glass hanging on the bookcase. He took the glass and adjusted it leisurely.

It gave back to him with startling distinctness

Walled In

the green, wooded bank, the shimmering blue river, the gray arch of the stone bridge where the current was strong. It gave the lithe shape of a single canoe paddling slowly down. In the boat were two passengers, a woman and a man—a spark of red, a dot of blue. At the bend of the river, on the other side of the bridge, as Ferris stood watching, before his staring eyes the canoe went over. He saw one little, scarlet arm thrown up—and then the marine-glass dropped from his hand and shivered with a crash upon the floor.

XV



'LL wash my face for Auntie Honor," said Trip. "But I won't do it for you. You're too long."

Jane Ferris, with red cheeks, a white apron, and a soapy hand, contended with Trip in the bathroom, where he stood intrenched. When she came too near he turned a faucet and splattered hot water on her. She protested, plaintively.

"Why, Trip! Why, Trip! Aunt Honor is as tall as I am."

"But she isn't so *long*," argued Trip. "I don't like 'em long. I like 'em short. I like 'em the way my pretty Mommer was—she never got soap in my eyes; I used to like my Mommer." Something else than soap got into Trip's eyes. The child dug at them with his grimy, small knuckles.

"There don't seem to be anybody for boys but mommers," said Trip, forlornly. Then the little man went savage, and turned upon himself and all the world to avenge his excess of emotion. "You lemme be and I'll wash Philo's face instead of me. I'll soap him 'n sousle him 'n duck him 'n chuck him under. I'll give him a whopping big

Walled In

barth, sir, 'n then I'll hang him out on the lines to dry. I'll starch him 'n iron him if you say so. If you've got to have somebody barthed, I'll barth Philo. You can go now," commanded Trip, haughtily.

Adroitly and stoutly two dirty hands, with the future of a college athlete in their little muscles, pushed Miss Ferris, sliding and resisting, to the door. Before she knew what had happened to her she stood panting in the hall, and she heard the key snap in the lock.

"Next time you let a man wash himself!" yelled Trip through the key-hole. "What do you know about barthing a boy? You haven't never had any. Come, now!"

Jane Ferris took off her apron; it was drenched. With trembling hands she spread it on the side of the hamper to dry. She would bear all the trials that her position at the head of his house had brought upon her for Myrton's sake. But she felt that the situation had come to a crisis between herself and Trip. With her handkerchief at her eyes she went to find his father.

It was a mid summer day and hot. Jane travelled heavily down-stairs in search of Myrton. His piazza-chair was unoccupied, and in the study he was not to be found. She glanced into the ripe garden; it was empty of him. As he could neither walk nor ride beyond the boundaries of his own place, his sister sank into one of the nests of anxiety in which she had always brooded over Myrton.

Walled In

She hurried back up-stairs—he seldom mounted the stairs, and only with great difficulty—but who could tell? She ran from room to room. Since the day when Myrton's wife and that unfortunate lad had gone to what Jane called "their long account," she had never seen Myrton enter Tessa's chamber.

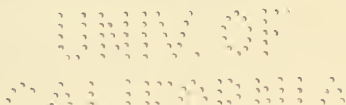
The door was closed, but it was not locked, and she pushed it nervously without the ceremony of a knock. It was too late to retreat; it was impossible to go on; and Jane stood still.

Everything in the room was just as Tessa had left it; he had allowed nothing to be touched. The bed, with its lace draperies and canopy, stood empty and smooth—the crimson couch at its foot. The fireplace was swept and cold. A blind was open at one of the windows, and the murky August sun settled heavily into the room; the light had a thick, unnatural appearance like the coloring which filtrated across the world after the volcanic eruption in Kratakoa.

The cut-glass and silver on Tessa's dressing-table showed orange red. In the pier-glass that had joyously reflected Tessa's picturesque contours, Jane Ferris stood "long," as Trip had called her. She wore the gingham house-dress, not unlike a housemaid's, in which she was accustomed to supervise her brother's household till after luncheon. In the bay-window Tessa's writing-desk had never been disturbed. Honoria had suggested that she might examine it, timidly asking, "Can't I do anything to spare you all that pain?" But Ferris had



JANE SAW HER BROTHER SEATED AT THE DAINTY DESK



Walled In

been fixed; no one should touch anything of Tessa's until his own hand were firm enough to do it.

Jane's conscientious breath came fast when she saw that her brother was seated at the dainty, foolish desk on which Tessa had written so many foolish, dainty notes. His arms were on the table, his face was on his arms. Before him lay a large sheet of his own manuscript paper (evidently taken from his study), which she had folded and filed away. In the middle of it was pinned a withered flower. It was a white cosmos, splashed with a dark stain, once crimson. Underneath it a few words were pencilled, perhaps a date, perhaps an explanation; but these Jane could not see. The curious vein of sentimentality which ran through Tessa's cool, self-indulgent nature had preserved the blossom that her husband wore on the day of his accident, when he was brought home to her broken in the autumn rain. Him she had not cherished. The flower she had.

While Jane stood, uncertain what to do, afraid to speak, afraid to stir, Myrton caught the flower to his lips. Then she heard him sob. The old maid drew back before the mystery of marriage. She resented it that this foolish creature could make him suffer still. She resented everything about Tessa—most of all the scandal which the manner of her death, and that misguided lad's, had brought upon the family name; it never had been blurred before—not so far back as her Puritan ancestry was matter of record to Jane's proud

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knowledge. Jane thanked Heaven that Myrton did not know the half of it; he was protected from that worst of all things by his affliction, and he always would be. Jane used to study Latin at the young ladies' seminary where she was educated, and she remembered a sentence that began, "De mortuis nil nisi—" but she was not sure of her accusative, and could not finish the quotation.

She left the room without a word, and shut the door softly. She had entirely forgotten Trip. Afterwards she thought it would have been a pity to trouble his poor father. When Honoria came back from the hospital everything would be easier—even Trip. Honoria could make Trip as he made mud-pies in the go-rash. The boy took whatever shape she pleased.

In September Honoria's engagement at the Harbor Hospital came to an end. The autumn was early and cold, and the cosmos outside the study windows did not return with her. In fact, Ferris watched in vain for it that year; the hurrying frosts bit it before it blossomed.

She did not surprise him as she did before, but wrote, announcing her day and train. Ferris sent to the station for her, and ordered a fire lighted in her room. One was blazing, too, in the study, in the big Franklin stove. She found him on a lounge, rolled up before it; the lounge was flanked with easy-chairs. It occurred to Honoria that one of the chairs was meant for Jane Ferris, but Jane was

Walled In

overseeing the traveller's late dinner, and Honoria sat down beside him. As silent, but as evident as the alteration of the furniture in the house, was the change which Honoria felt in her relation to the professor. She could not have said whether it were of her making or his; she only knew that she was aware of an irritating constraint in his presence. This struck her as an absurdity, and she settled herself in her chair with an odd determination not at all uncharacteristic of Honoria's gentle temper when a matter of importance was at stake. There she stayed until she felt at ease, and as soon as she did she left him. They talked of little things—Trip and Philos, the floating hospital, and sailor hats. Of the past or of the future neither spoke. When she had eaten her supper she came back with a kind of dogged naturalness. In that little time something indefinable had brushed him like the passing of a wing. Had he thought? Or had he purposed not to think? He held out his hand to her warmly.

"I *am* glad to see you," he said; as if there had been any doubt about it. "It is good to have you home again. Now you have got here—stay, Honoria."

Honoria made no reply. Then Jane came in. Jane took the other easy-chair and talked about Trip. She related the history of the scene in the bathroom. The professor had never heard it before, and he looked troubled.

"Besides that," complained Jane, "he uses bad language. He says 'gee whiz'!"

Walled In

Honorio laughed. "You should see some of the faces we wash in the hospital. And as for language—Jane, in all your life you never *heard* any bad language."

"You will look after Trip, won't you?" asked the father, anxiously. "You always could do anything with the fellow."

"Don't give it another thought," said Honorio. "I will see to Trip."

The professor sighed contentedly. Pretty soon he asked if she were too tired to read aloud.

"Why, Myrton!" objected Jane Ferris, "she has been travelling all day. You know I am always ready to read to you. But you don't let me."

A glint of merriment in Honorio's eyes answered the uncontrollable spark in the professor's.

Honorio could not help imagining how Jane Ferris would read aloud—*Evelyn Hope*, for instance, or a Sonnet from the Portuguese. Ann came in presently to announce a caller, and as soon as Jane had left the room the professor sat up hard against the sofa pillows.

"There never was a more excellent woman," he protested, loyally. "I don't believe there is another sister like her in the country. She reads Maria Edgeworth admirably."

"What will you have?" asked Honorio, running her fingers across the shelves of the poetry alcove. Instinctively she omitted the love poems. She took down his big, old-fashioned Wordsworth—the one covered in light sheepskin—and read the

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Ode to Immortality. She read it with a fervent serenity, as if they had been two old people with life behind them. Then she took the "Excursion" ("something in long sentences, without too much punctuation"), and while she read he slept. Honoria laid down the book and watched him steadily and silently. Suddenly he spoke.

"I have not been asleep—only resting. . . . Did you see the portrait when you were in Boston?"

"Several times."

"Is it going to be good? Will it be like her?" asked Ferris, eagerly.

"I think so. Of course it is at the dangerous stage; it might turn out either way. But I believe you will like it. It has Tessa's pose and coloring. The expression is always a lottery, you know. But I think it will be a comfort to you."

"I want something we can hang up in Trip's room," explained Ferris. "That is, by and by—when he grows older. She did love Trip."

"I know," said Honoria. Her eyes filled. "And I loved her," she added, gently.

"That is why it is so comforting to me to have you home again," said Myrton Ferris.

"Yes," answered Honoria, "I understand."

The winter set in early. It came about inevitably that Honoria resumed her old position in the household, which distinctly recognized her as the nurse of its invalid. To this mission she clung with a kind of divine obstinacy. She resolutely

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ignored the constraint between herself and Tessa's husband, which at first had grated upon her sensibilities and good sense, and under this heroic treatment it gradually declined. With her purpose to save her patient, she determined that nothing so small should interfere.

"I am going to take you to ride next week," she said one November day. "There are things we must do with you; there are experiments that we must try. You see, I must make you better, I must cure you before I go."

"Before you go where?" Ferris looked up from the third lecture on style, on which he had been at work. "And when are you going?"

"Oh, I don't know where, and I don't know when," replied Honoria. "I have my life to live. And of course, you must see—"

"I don't see why you shouldn't live your life with me—with us," protested Ferris.

"Don't you?" asked Honoria.

Somehow her laugh hurt him; he thought she jested with his earnestness, and he was conscious of discomfort. Honoria was more destitute of sentimentality than any woman whom he had ever known. Yet even Honoria had not forgotten that she had once been about to leave his house—nor the reason why. Ferris, apparently, had forgotten it; or she felt that he had; it amounted to the same thing.

Honoria was not unhappy, but she was not at ease. She experienced chronic perplexity. The

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affection for her patient, which had seemed so natural while Myrton's wife lived, had, by reason of Tessa's death, become an uncomfortable thing. Honoria did not find herself more free to assume this emotion, but less so. She was met at every turn by the solemn readjustment which death gives to the pleasant facts of life.

Myrton's bereavement seemed to have removed him from her indefinitely; even his invalid dependence on her, she thought, had decreased. Their friendly kindness, their mutual content in each other's society had, somehow, passed from foreground to perspective. The very simplicity and nobility of Honoria's nature and feeling made it harder for her to follow the movement of the great natural law against which she had come up. She stood at the perilous point where many a friendship between man and woman has perished of the unrestricted liberty to cultivate it.

Myrton lamented his wife with a fervor, it seemed, in proportion to the difficulty that he had experienced in being happy with her.

He blamed himself bitterly, and at times morbidly, for his faults, and Tessa's, too; for his mistakes and hers besides. He grieved for Tessa the more because their marriage had been the disaster that it was. Had he forgotten that he ever fought for his soul's breath in any current of feeling that did not set towards his dead wife? Or did he remember, and regret?

In the early autumn Ferris's little book had

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come out. He called it by the title of his second choice, *The Book of the Friends*. It was a small affair, what one of our American poets used to call a booklet. But it was slight in no other sense. The critics applauded it as one of the books that have blood in them. A reviewer with more perception than the rest said, "This is the beating of a heart."

A glance at the brief table of contents indicated the simplicity and sincerity of the book: "Solitude—Sickness—Sorrow"; it dealt with these three alone of all among the friends of the soul.

Every page was so packed with thought that one must return and reread the book to estimate the refinement of its feeling, or even the quality of its style, for it had quality, and it had style.

It was, in fact, a monody on pain. But it had the masculine key from first to last—endurance, courage, cheerfulness. There was not a weak note in it.

Something after Christmas-time Honoria brought in with the mail one day a letter to the professor from his publishers. He opened it languidly, but when he had read it his face paled with pleasure. Without a word he handed it to her.

"MY DEAR SIR,—It gratifies us to be able to tell you that your book is moving grandly. It has already far surpassed your expectations, or even ours. A new edition is in press, and another will soon be needed. The orders are coming in rapidly.

"The book will be an unquestionable success, and we

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beg to ask if you cannot follow it at once with something else while the attention of the public is fixed upon you? We should be glad if you would give us a monograph of a different sort—perhaps an appreciation of some poet to whom you feel yourself especially akin.

“We should be happy at any time to publish your lectures in the department from which we understand you have resigned. The position which this little book will give you with the general public would reinforce your professional reputation, and give an interest to such a venture. Our house has always done something in the line of educational work, and we should hope to make yours the text-book in your department. We have looked into the subject, and are convinced that something new and vigorous is needed to stimulate the study of English letters in our schools and colleges.

“We are, yours very truly,

“ and Co.”

Honoria handed the letter back to him without a word. Her eyes were exquisite with his reflected pleasure.

“After all,” he said, pathetically, “I may be able to get at something again. I suppose lecturing to boys isn’t really the only way to do a man’s work.”

“You have always done a man’s work!” cried Honoria; “you have suffered like a man, not like a woman.”

“But you tell me that women bear suffering better than men.”

“So they do,” admitted Honoria. “As a race, they do. They have more patience than men. But you have fortitude—that is harder and greater.

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You have endured like a man, not like a slave. You will make this over to sick people—the world is packed with them! So few know how to treat them—it is like rude nursing, the way they are handled; it hurts more than it helps. They will say, ‘Here is some one who understands.’ They will read and remember. Even if it doesn’t seem to make any difference in their misery at the time, it will come back to them. It will be like one of the deep-working remedies; it will go to the seat of the malady. Some day, even if they don’t know what did it, they will be better, they will be happier. And if they do know, they will bless you. And you will have earned their blessing.”

Moved by her own emotion, and half regretting that she had expressed it—without caution, without reflection, swung along by one of her own natural, beautiful impulses—Honorina abruptly left the room. Ferris stared after her.

“Why didn’t she stay and talk it over with me?” he thought.

The winter went cheerfully. The professor occupied himself with preparing his lectures for the press, and Honorina occupied herself with him. There is an invisible line in convalescence, known to every nurse and physician, beyond which a patient does not advance without what may be called the electricity of fate. Honorina perceived that Ferris did not pass that line. She was conscious that she could do nothing more for him; and in the

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spring she told him so, and prepared to yield the case.

"I have exhausted my resources," she said.

To his protests she made no reply. To his entreaties she returned irrelevant answers. Ferris was astonished and hurt. After a few futile efforts he ceased to push the matter, and Honoria went away. She did not return to her summer work in Boston, but accepted a position in New York. It was a severe post in a surgical ward. Ferris thought of her anxiously, and wrote often. She replied kindly. In a few weeks she wrote that she had been promoted, and was now superintendent of the nursing staff. There was a tone of finality about this letter which troubled Ferris. He answered briefly and superficially.

The summer was hot, and he lost strength. Smarting under a sense of what he was pleased to call Honoria's desertion, he did not tell her this. September was a warm month and a weak one. Ferris half hated the eternal sunshine. It poured on forever. The earth seemed to shrink, a reluctant Danaë, from the shower of gold. Ferris was so dejected that he could see nothing beautiful about it.

"I should like a black frost better," he said to Jane.

He was sitting on the piazza one day alone with Philos, when President Hildreth came around the corner of the house without the ceremony of a knock. He had the manner which Ferris had

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learned to associate with an important errand, and after a few commonplaces had passed between the two the professor said so in his direct fashion.

"What is it, Hildreth? Bad news?"

"Not for you," answered the president, quickly. "It is a personal matter. It concerns myself."

"You have accepted a diplomatic position," observed Ferris. "I shall miss you, Hildreth."

"You go too fast," replied Mr. Hildreth. "I have accepted nothing; at least not yet. My public career depends partly on my private affairs."

The president did not look at the professor while he spoke. His strong, experienced profile could no more be read than a hieroglyph without the key.

"Now, what does he mean by that?" thought Ferris. More abruptly than he was in the habit of speaking, the other said:

"Do you expect Miss Tryde to return to Rutledge?"

"Miss Tryde makes her own plans of life," observed Ferris, not without some constraint. "I have no control over them. My house is hers, of course, whenever she wishes to honor it; for the present she seems to be absorbed in her career. Women are, in these days."

"But not her kind of a woman," exclaimed the president. "I do not like to think of her as living that—severe life. I wish she were out of that infer—that hospital."

"Allow me to swear for you—I've resigned. That infernal hospital! I'll be your proxy for

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a warmer adjective, if you say so," interrupted Ferris.

"She is as inaccessible where she is," suggested Hildreth, "as if she were pursuing the avocations of an angel—whatever those may be. The usual human motives and methods do not reach her. Do you find that they do?" he added, in a tone whose significance it was impossible for a fine apprehension to mistake.

Now Ferris looked straight at his friend. His own face had not changed color, but it had shrivelled and aged.

"I have ventured to wonder," continued Hildreth, choosing his words with obvious precision, "whether this is so of accident or of intent; whether, in short, there is any fundamental purpose in her preoccupation. I mean, whether one would be intrusive who should to any extent disturb it. In short, I have allowed myself to question whether there could be any reason why one would not be at liberty to—influence her, if that were conceivable—in the direction of sparing herself. Her duties must be extremely arduous."

Ferris felt the tension of a crisis for which speech was not subtle enough, and for which a noble perception was the only vocabulary. He looked off towards the river through the hot air. The water drank the wearisome rain of sunshine contentedly.

"No," he answered, very slowly, "I do not know of any reason why Miss Tryde should not be per-

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suaded—if that were possible—to choose a less exhausting and exacting method of life.”

“Let me move your screen,” Hildreth proposed. “The light is in your eyes.”

He went away without another word. The two men parted warmly, but they did not shake hands. The sun reached around the screen; Ferris sat in the vinelight with closed eyes. He was thinking, “What does this mean? Something is behind it. I suppose the man intends to give me a chance. It is like him. Well—I will give him his.”

Ferris’s heavy lids lifted, and his eyes swam towards the gleaming river; his lips moved.

“Poor Tessa!” they said.

That evening a long-distance call flashed from Routledge to New York, and Professor Ferris demanded the superintendent of nurses in the hospital which he had rung up. He was told that she was off duty; she was exhausted from overwork, and the house physician had ordered her to sleep; she could not be disturbed. He left his name and number, and went back to the study. Within an hour the single call of his private wire struck through the house. The night was clear and windless, and with the thrilling distinctness of a flute, he heard Honoria’s voice, scarcely raised above its usual low, melodious pitch.

“What is it, professor? What has happened? Are you worse?”

“I don’t know,” replied Ferris, honestly.

“Do you know what you called me up for?”

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"Perfectly. I want you to come home."

"I am sorry not to oblige you. My engagement here is imperative."

"Go back to your engagement afterwards, if you will. I want you to come home. It is a matter of importance. I want to see you; I must see you."

"Is it really necessary?" asked Honoria, in her business tone.

"It is necessary to me. I don't know whether it will be so to you."

"Very well," said Honoria, after an ominous hesitation, "I will see what can be done. The most I could ask for would be a short furlough. It is the most I *would* ask for. It could only be a matter of a few days."

"A few days would do. I am very much obliged to you."

"You are sure you are not worse?"

"You can judge for yourself when you get here."

"You know I should be sorry for that," admitted Honoria.

The receiver shook in his hand; he hung it up with difficulty when the music of her ceased upon the wire.

In a few days she telegraphed that she had obtained a week's furlough, and would reach Routledge the following night.

Ferris immediately sent to the house with the white pillars a note, which ran:

"DEAR PRESIDENT HILDRETH,—Miss Tryde is coming to-night to make us a few days' visit. I wonder if you

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could make it possible to drive over and meet her at the Junction on the arrival of the 6.30 train? I cannot, you know. I should like some one to show her the courtesy.

"Faithfully yours,

FERRIS."

Then he locked the door and awaited the feet of destiny. It did not seem to help the matter any that he had invited them to trample on him. He refused his supper, and sat in the twilight like a miserable boy. As the dark grew on, he was aware of a faint, attractive odor in the room. He could think of no better adjective than to call it a sympathetic odor. He remembered that the cosmos was blooming this year, and how he had always thought that the perfume of it deepened at sunset. He thought of the beheaded cosmos which sacrificed itself to pity him on the night when he was brought home hurt, three years ago. As then in body, so now in spirit he felt gashed and broken, and it was as if nothing ruder than his flowers could understand why.

He was conscious that any other human being—at all events, any other man—would have said to him, "Why, then, did you put yourself in such a position? Whatever the outcome, you can't complain. It is nobody's fault but your own."

At half-past seven he heard wheels. He unlocked the study-door. He did not go to meet her, but she came in as he had known she would, at once. He was hurrying to light his lamp. The shade trembled from his hand and fell to the floor.

"Never mind," said Honoria, soothingly, as if

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he had been quite a sick patient. "Ann will sweep the pieces by-and-by. I will light the candle."

She brought the little English candle and set it down on the study-table between them. She threw off her hat and long travelling coat, but did not sit down. She looked to the invalid man very tall and strong.

"Well," she began, "what is it?" Her eyes were brilliant, and her color vivid. He thought, "I did not know that she was so beautiful." She took the candle and passed its pale, pink light over his face.

"You did not tell me that you were worse."

"I don't think it matters. Does it?"

"That depends upon the point of view," said Honoria, with an abrupt change in the temperature of her manner; he felt as if he needed furs to protect himself against it.

"Did President Hildreth meet you at the Junction?"

"Oh yes."

"And drove you home?"

"Yes, he drove me home."

"As he did the day you found Philos for me?"

"I thought of that; so did Mr. Hildreth."

"Are you going to marry him?" asked Ferris, outright.

Honoria made no reply. He felt her displeasure rising between them like a glass wall. But he stumbled obstinately on.

"Has he asked you? . . . Don't look at me so.

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I mean that I understand his position. I don't think I am overstepping when I ask you if you are going to marry the president of Routledge College?"

She picked up her hat and coat and turned from him.

"Is that what you called me away from my hospital for?" she cried.

He had never seen Honoria angry before. He would have tried to appease her, but before he could speak she had left the room. Ferris sat down before the stove and lighted the fire. He felt chilly and weak.

Out in the September night the students were singing half a mile away. The wind set towards the professor's house, and he could hear the words quite plainly:

*"Nelly was a la—dy;
Last night she died."*

XVI



JANE FERRIS came into the study. What appeared to be an iridescent gray cloud was thrown across her arm and stirred in the draught as she opened the door. The thing looked half alive.

"Did you give Honoria my message?" asked the professor, impatiently.

"Oh yes, brother, I gave her the message. She asked to be excused this evening. She has gone to her room for the night. I think she must be tired out—she looks it. She said she would see you the first thing in the morning."

"I particularly wished to see her to-night," urged Ferris.

"That is what she said," repeated Jane Ferris. She came up to the lounge where he was tossing, and held out the billowy, transparent mass that clung to her hands. It was Tessa's butterfly dress.

"I have just been asking Honoria's advice about this. I thought she would know better than I what to do with it. But she was not willing to touch it. She told me to ask you."

"And she was quite right," imperiously said

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Ferris. "I have expressed my wishes before. No one is to handle Tessa's things but myself. Honoria knows how I feel about that. Leave it here, Jane."

"I can see my way clearly about everything else," urged Jane. "Her underclothing would fill a missionary barrel—two, perhaps. Most of her common dresses could go to Cousin Ophelia, who is about her size, you know. That crimson cloth and the ermine would fit out some college girl for three or four winters. The University Society would only be too grateful for the blue voile, and the silk muslins, and her grenadine, and there is a morning dress with orange trimmings. That would be quite useful for some small, poor minister's wife with a young family. The green suit—" Jane gasped, pierced by the arrow in Myrton's eyes.

Partly to recover from her embarrassment, she went persistently on:

"But *this*, I own, I don't know what to do with. I can't think of anybody who would be likely to wear it, short of the Queen of England. Poor Tessa was so very dressy, Myrton, and spent so much on her clothes— Oh yes, I know you liked to have her. And she did look pretty as a picture in them," admitted Jane.

Ferris held up his arms for the shimmering stuff.

"Leave us together," he said; as if the gauze thing had been flesh and blood.

"I do hope I haven't hurt your feelings," pleaded Jane, and she left him as he had asked.

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Ferris sat for a while without stirring. Tessa's dress filled his arms as if it had been Tessa—brilliant, picturesque, elfin. He caressed the gray tissue with his long fingers; he thought the silken butterflies started beneath his touch. Once a gust from the open window took the dress and tossed it up against his shoulder. He bent and laid his cheek upon it. His eyes were wet.

"Poor Tessa!" he said.

Suddenly it occurred to him that there was something he had meant to do—he, himself, alone—with Tessa's clothes. No doubt it was unnecessary, but it would be safer. His hand groped for a pocket in the embroidered gauze, but he found nothing of the kind. He was about to abandon the idea when something crackled under his hands in the long, gray silk underskirt, where, it seemed, an apology for a pocket had been permitted by the modiste. From this he drew a piece of crumpled paper and held it to the light. He did so doggedly. He felt that there was nothing else to be done. The writing was not Tessa's, but the words were addressed to Tessa. He glanced, but did not finish reading, and flung the paper into the failing fire. A cold, sharp glint like the point of an icicle formed in his eye. He pushed the dress from his shoulder, from his breast, from his knee. It fell upon the floor and he let it lie there dishonored at his feet. It was as if something in his allegiance to Tessa gave way within him that had never snapped before. It was not clear to him what or why. Worse than

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this foolish scrap of paper had he known of Tessa, living. Why, then, scorn it so of Tessa, dead? Idealizing Tessa, dead or living, was like climbing a mountain of glass. As fast as he gained a little, he slipped back. He found himself exhausted with his loyalty to her light memory. This did not so much haunt him as taunt him. Then he remembered that last day, and sensitively he feared lest he might do the defenceless dead a mortal wrong. Ought he not to think of Tessa, to dream of her, to dwell with her, where she had left off? Not where she was, and as she was before that last uplifted hour. The great struggle between the quick and the dead, ancient as the first grave, and young as the last love, and mysterious as the silence which follows death, contended over the man.

With the touch of superstition that tempts the wisest and misleads the weakest, Ferris looked about the silent room; then gazed steadily at the portrait over his mantel. It was almost a painful likeness—the coquettish eyes, the hard lines about the mouth. He gathered the gauze dress and laid it down upon the lounge. It could not have been said that he handled it without respect—no, nor without gentleness. But in his expression, as in his consciousness, it was as if something had been broken.

“Tessa,” he said, aloud, “what I found has spoiled the dress. There is no help for it.”

He seized the beautiful robe without compunc-

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tion and crushed it into the Franklin stove. He jammed it upon the embers of the little fire that he had lighted and held it there. It flared and blazed brilliantly, roaring up the chimney. He could have sworn that the embroidered butterflies writhed. Panting, he sat down and watched the thing burn. Then he turned his head again and looked over his shoulder.

"Tessa? Listen. Have you anything to say to me?"

From what brain cell or heartbeat, from what fact or fancy did the answer start? To the day of his death the educated man will not discuss with any person the emotion that mastered him when the empty room thrilled or seemed to thrill about him, and grew or seemed to grow articulate with seven half-mocking, half-plaintive words:

"Myrton! Why don't you kiss my ring?"

The great system of salvation that we call the humorous, which preserves the balance of character and the poise of fate, interposed between Ferris and the tragedy of his too intense emotion. Jane Ferris rushed in screaming. Behind her trooped a distracted family.

"The house is afire!" cried Jane.

"Routledge!
Routledge.
Hi-ho-rah!"

yelled Trip. "Bully for you, Papa! You've set the house afire!"

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Into the domestic bedlam Honoria's self-possessed voice came like the soothing tones of an alienist. "It is only the chimney. What have you been doing to it, professor?"

"Destroying history," replied Ferris. "Let it burn!"

"But all the soot is ablaze," sobbed Jane.

"Let it blaze!" insisted the professor. "It has been choking up the draught long enough. A few minutes will clear it out."

He spoke collectedly, but his excitement was so evident that Honoria gave him a professional look before she flung a quick and quiet order towards Ann:

"Bring all the salt in the house. A fire that is quenched from below can't make any headway above."

"But the house isn't yours, Myrton. It belongs to the trustees. You have no *right* to burn it! I will telephone to the department!" Thus argued Jane and the New England conscience. Jane wrung her thin hands as she ran.

"Wait," said Ferris, coolly. "Let Honoria see what she can do first. Give her a chance."

Honoria knelt before the raging chimney with a big box of salt. She looked more amused than frightened. The roar in the throat of the chimney began to weaken to a growl, and in a few minutes it rumbled away. A mass of embers, ashen gray on the surface, stirred a little in the stove. Honoria picked up the first thing she laid her hand on

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—it proved to be the shovel—and with it packed the burning débris down. As she did this, something detached itself from the smothered embers and flew up the chimney wildly. It was an embroidered butterfly that had escaped, unsinged.

“I must open all your windows,” complained Jane Ferris, “to let out the soot. The odor will suffocate you.”

“Anything you please,” said Ferris, in a strange tone. He glanced about the study poignantly, as if he were taking farewell of something, and walked with strong steps through the two long halls.

In the drawing-room he sat down ceremoniously, as though he had been a guest under his own roof. Ann had gone to send Trip back to bed, and the house had resumed its decorum and its usual stillness. Jane and Honoria sat on the sofa. It was a blue damask sofa, and against it he perceived that the tall outline of Honoria showed in white. She had slipped from her travelling dress into a woollen gown of the cream tint dear to women. It was belted and clasped at the throat by a gold cross. Something of the severity of her uniform clung to the air of the dress.

“Jane,” he observed, “it is still early, and I am not going back to that room just yet. If you will excuse me, I want to talk with Honoria. You don’t mind, do you?” he added, as an afterthought.

“Not in the least,” said Jane, primly. “Only

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you know, Myrton, it is very late; it is about ten o'clock."

"I don't care if it is midnight," said the invalid, with an abandoned air.

"But then you might not sleep—"

"Hang my sleep!" cried the professor.

Jane rose with a grieved look. "If you are going to swear, Myrton—"

She tiptoed out, and the long, blue silk portière fell behind her.

The room was brilliantly lighted, and all its coloring was cool and rich. Against the long mirror, thirty feet away, the great Venus stood, resplendent, without tricks or trappings of plush or panel, reflected, not relieved, within the glass. Tessa's piano was closed. At the windows the thick curtains were drawn. The unfrequented, unfamiliar room seemed as foreign to Ferris as if he had been in the house of another man. He sat down on the sofa beside Honoria, who had not spoken.

He began precisely where he had left off.

"Are you going to marry President Hildreth?"

"Why do you persist so?" said Honoria, coldly.

"It—it annoys me."

"Are you going to marry him?" reiterated Ferris.

"Do you want me to?"

"You have not answered my question."

"Well then—no."

"Why not?"

"Now I am sure you are exceeding your character."

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"No marriage could be better for you," argued Ferris. "I mean, as the world considers marriage. There is nothing that he could not offer you—no position, no luxury, no comfort. Within a year he will be ambassador to France or Germany. He is a fine fellow. He is a good man. And he has loved you ever since he knew you. The offer of his hand is an honor to any woman. I believe he has that in his heart which will make any woman happy. He is my friend. I trust him. I want to be sure that you know what you are about; I want to be quite sure. You ought to understand what you are declining."

"I understand perfectly," said Honoria, in an even voice, "that I am declining to spend my life with one of the best and strongest men I have ever known. As you say, he could offer me every comfort—excepting one."

"Do you mind telling me what that is?"

"The comfort of loving him," replied Honoria, quietly.

"But why do you not love him? Tell me why. How can you help it?"

"I don't know," said Honoria, without hesitation. "I wish I did."

Ferris regarded her sombrely.

"Well, I have done the best I can for him. You will tell him so, won't you?"

"It doesn't strike me that I shall," Honoria answered, with a slight, uneasy smile.

"This is a ridiculous rôle to play," Ferris burst

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forth. "I feel like a fellow in a popular novel—one of the romantic school, 'where things are not what they seem.' You know the kind. He deliberately goes to work to set the girl adrift in a runaway balloon—cuts the ropes himself, and then stands gaping after her; he calls it destiny; he spells it with a big D. I read one such last week."

"How did she come down?" asked Honoria. "Or is she still going up? Did she admire him for his admirable dexterity?"

"She jumped overboard, if I remember. She said that she preferred death with him to a balloon without him."

"Oh, did she?" observed Honoria. Her manner was as light and as perfectly adjusted as that of a society woman sitting out a dance in a conservatory. It needed a regal costume, and quarrelled with her severe white gown and the fleck of sacred gold at her throat.

"I did not suppose," proceeded Ferris, with a gesture that waved this digression out of the conversation, "that anybody was ever fool enough to do such things in real life—Honoria, listen to me."

"I am listening," said Honoria, gently.

"Look at me, Honoria."

Her falling lids lifted obediently. For an instant he saw her blurred in a beautiful mist that no earthly eye but a woman's ever holds.

"Honoria, if I were a man instead of a mummy—"

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Honorio rose from the sofa and retreated from him against the blue wall.

"Don't you think that we have talked enough? This is—hard." She drew in one quick, agitated breath. He got to his feet and confronted her.

"You must know—you must see—I cannot live without you."

"Can't you, professor?"

"No, nor I can't live with you. You have grown too dear. I cannot bear it any longer. I can't bear it when you are away. I can't stand it when you are here. You see, the trouble is, Honorio, I love you."

"Do you, professor? I didn't think you did."

"What can a man do?" demanded Ferris. "How can he offer his ruined life—sick, dependent, crippled, a pensioner on her mercy—to a woman?"

"I don't mind any of those things," said Honorio.

"Oh, you have the pity of a redeeming spirit! But I won't have your pity! I won't accept a substitute."

"Nor would I give you one," Honorio lifted her head. Then it drooped before him. "I could take care of you. I could make you better, I think."

"You shall not marry me to make me better! I will not accept the sacrifice."

"What sacrifice?" she asked.

"My God, Honorio!" cried Ferris. "I cannot keep this up any longer. If you mean what you say—"

Walled In

"I mean more than I say," faltered Honoria; "more than I can say—more than I dare to."

Like a tide that recreates a map, the man advanced towards her. She came half-way to meet his love, as she had come all the way to meet his suffering. Incredulous, exalted, ecstatic, he drew back and held her off—her face in his two shaking hands.

"But you said—you said that you had your life to live."

"I could live yours," said Honoria.

The miracle of joy set in at first more subtly than obviously upon the stricken man. Its immediate effect was an intense reaction, which seemed to reduce his strength. He was too happy to care whether he were ill or well; but Honoria watched him not without anxiety. She prolonged her furlough, and returned to the hospital only to secure her discharge as soon as possible. In her short absence he had changed so that her heart leaped with a swift pang.

He was standing in the study, waiting for her, wordless, with out-stretched arms. She ran into them with a sweet impetuosity so new, so exquisite that it smote the breath of delight from him.

Timidly she lifted her face. "I will never leave you again," she said. She clung to him, and put up her hand and stroked his cheek, lifting her docile lips.

Mossed In

Then he, who had so long known the divine passion of her pity, said to his heart:

"I have learned what her tenderness will mean."

The winter was a cold one, but the invalid did not feel it. He lived in the climate of the summer lands, and walked in that garden on the hither side of Eden which only sacred history knows, but whose mystical name it has not recorded. It is the garden of the bud whose blossom is the rapture of earth, and whose fruit is the desire of heaven. It is the only land in the topography of human feeling where a woman is a queen. There are others where she is called such, herself knowing the name to be a sweet subterfuge. In this alone she assumes the ideal of herself, and rules her subject lord.

Honoraria reigned gently. She found little space for the coquetries of betrothal; she was so bent upon her business of curing him. He often wondered how it would have been with her if she had promised to marry a well man. Apparently she did not wonder at all. As she had ministered, so she loved, without a thought of herself—dedicated, wonderful. Before she loved she had been pity impersonate. Loving, she became woman essential.

We smile at the old word adoration, mossed, like the elect of the roses, by the lovers of all time. Scarcely less—nothing more modern or more untried by the masculine instinct—could have defined the feeling of Ferris.

Walled In

"I am losing my head," he cried, one day. "I do not discriminate you. You must have your faults. Why do I not see them? What are they?"

"Those that I don't know you will find out for yourself." She laughed, but sobered quickly. "But those I do are very important. They are not on the surface, like some faults; they are fundamental and serious, accordingly."

"Warn me against them," persisted Ferris. "I know you are generous enough—if I ask you."

"I shall do what you ask me. You know that," said Honoria, reproachfully.

"Oh, come! Then I won't ask you. You know *that*."

"Then I will tell you without asking," confessed Honoria. "I think my worst fault is pretty deep down. It is the not being willing to be set aside, to be useless. It is the craving to help. I need to be needed. I love to be loved."

"You will find that fault to be incurable, then," cried Ferris, rapturously. "You will never have a chance to overcome it. Need to be needed! Love to be loved! If I can't do anything else for you—a sick, dependent, depressing fellow—I can honor that draft. The fund is big enough. Draw on it forever, Honoria!"

"Besides that," continued Honoria, humbly, "I think too much about what people suffer—yes, and animals—everything that can feel—only the sick most of all, because it was my particular way of being sorry and showing it. I am sorry for every-

Walled In

thing, for everybody. I am sorry most of the time. I want to comfort something, to ease somebody's pain—I want to lift the everlasting load. I can't sit still and see it. It's like standing by and seeing a horse crushed under a dray and not raising a finger. It's like passing a lost child or a lost dog on the street, and not taking trouble about it. I can't do that. I don't know how to do it. I've always been afraid I should be made to do it, just because it's the one thing I feel I could not bear. . . . I think I could bear almost anything else," said Honoria.

"And now," suggested Ferris, "you have got to be sorry and do something about it for the rest of your life."

"Thank God I have!" Honoria smiled divinely. He was on his lounge, and she knelt on the floor beside it and laid her cheek to his.

Then he began to deprecate her tenderness.

"Happiness is driving the chivalry out of me! I feel as if I were taking unmanly advantage of your compassion—it is unfathomable. I never saw anything like it!"

"I thought we had done talking about compassion," said Honoria.

"But love ought to bring a woman everything I cannot give you: ease of heart, ease of life, freedom from harassing care. You are binding yourself to a lifelong load—"

"It will be as light as the heart that lifts it," said Honoria.

Walled In

"To an unremitting anxiety—"

"Which it is my pride to carry."

"You will live the life of a nurse—after all: the dull routine, the unnatural conditions of invalidism forever weighing on that divine sympathy of yours—no relief, no alternative. Sometimes I feel as if I ought to be put in irons for letting you do it."

"Dear," said Honoria, "I told you once, at the beginning—I do not mind those things."

"But some time you might. You might feel differently. You might regret your sacrifice—"

"If you were blind," interrupted Honoria, "I would be eyes to you. If you were paralyzed, I would be nerve and muscle for you. If you were in disgrace, I would share it. If you were in prison, I would break some law and go there, too. If you were starving, I could starve. If you were in any of the worst troubles, and I could be of use to you, I should be a blessed woman. Nothing could hurt me except not to have the right to comfort you."

"I did not know there was such a woman in the world!" he cried.

"Dear," said Honoria, "I love you."

This was on Sunday, and Jane Ferris was concerned with Trip's religious instruction. Trip was singing, shrilly, "Shall we gather at the river?" thumping time on the bass keys with Philo's paws, meanwhile.

"Oh, go and stop that!" groaned Ferris. "Can't you? Please!"

Walled In

Honorina slid away, and presently he heard her sensitive voice at the piano. She sang:

"Then they who once have sown in tears,
Shall reap again in joy."

"Why have you never concerned yourself with my religious education?" Ferris asked, when she came back. "From your point of view you must have felt that I was sacrificing my spiritual diploma."

"Oh, I have never been afraid. I have always been sure that it would come out right when you got well. Faith is health. Unbelief is a malady."

"You may be right, for aught I know," admitted Ferris.

"Anybody who has ever done hospital work," said Honorina—"I mean, anybody who thinks and feels—must either believe everything or nothing at all. Nothing can explain this world except another."

"Love explains it!" he exclaimed. "Heaven explains it, as you say. I was in hell, Honorina. Now I am in heaven. You cannot stagger me with any miracle after this. Anything might occur—even personal immortality—so far as I can see. Nothing would surprise me now."

In the mist of promise that blurs the country of delight, the sick man began to find his strength. His improvement disappointed Honorina a little; it was slower than she had hoped. But she did

Walled In

not tell him so, and to him who had suffered so long and so much, this gradual and imperfect release was a marvellous affair. He was like a child turning the pages of a wonder-book.

"I thought you said you had exhausted your resources," he reminded her.

She lifted a pair of timid eyes. "So I had, then. Now—why, now I haven't begun to draw on them."

It was winter by the climate, but spring by the calendar when they were married. There was a late March day, and a wild mountain snow-storm swept down upon Routledge. But this did not seem to be of consequence. Ferris scarcely noticed it, as Honoria had feared that he might, and as there was to be no wedding, but a marriage, nothing mattered. The "tumultuous privacy" of the whirling whiteness shut them in kindly, and they loved it and laughed at it.

In the blue room the great Venus (that had regarded their betrothal) stood observant. The college pastor, who was not an unimaginative man, was so impressed by the presence of the statue that, when he went home (having no wife to talk to) he wrote in his diary:

"I suppose it is because one is accustomed to see this beautiful specimen of pagan art attended by crimsons and velvets and effects, that the severe environment is so noteworthy. I was moved by the solitude, the dignity, and simplicity of the figure seen against the mirror, re-

Mated In

lieved only by her own reflection. I had a fantastical feeling as if we ought to have her name on the marriage certificate:

“*Witness to the marriage of Myrton Ferris and Honoria Tryde:—*
Venus Victrix.”

And now the solemn miracle of joy began its incredible work. So constant was her presence; so exquisite her care, so infinite her tenderness, that only a dying man could have refused life and vigor from the bounty of her love. To love greatly has been called a kind of genius, and Honoria, who had pitied greatly, added the supreme gift to her nature and the supreme possession to his life. Tireless, inventive, executive, her heart ran in advance of his wishes, of his needs, even of his whims. Now that the barriers between them were down, her tenderness became a sublimated thing. In all his troubled past he had never imagined that marriage could be what he found that it was.

Like all men he had spelled woman by the orthography of his own experience. Three women had related themselves to his life—the domestic, the frivolous, and now the strong; and this last had effaced the others, as words efface the alphabet.

Since the day of the ancient story it has been true that out of strength will come forth sweetness; and strong sweetness is the royal house of life.

They had kept to his old rooms for the quiet of them, and sometimes in the night, when he waked and found her by his side, he could have thought

Walled In

that he had been the victim of some intricate hallucination; that he had never been crippled or ill; that he had never been neglected and desolate; that he had never sunk into the pit from which she had drawn him.

She waked at a breath, as nurses do. What she had called her resources seemed to be as tireless as divinity. If he had permitted it she would have read to him half the night when he could not sleep. In the small gleam of the rose-candle he watched her move about his room on little ministries for his comfort. She was transfigured before him—no angel, no spirit, but a wife who knew how to love. To turn his cheek upon her hand was life. She fed him with her tenderness as one feeds the famishing.

Honorina was jealous of her privilege. Life had defrauded him. He should be reimbursed of her. One love had defaulted to him. Hers should endow him beyond his dearest dream. He had been hurt and wronged and misread. She would heal him, because she understood him. It seemed to her that her heart would break if she could not cure him. For Ferris, he had ceased to think of himself, whether his racked body would be lost or saved. He thought of her.

At times Honorina was critical and impatient of the joy miracle, because it moved cautiously and slowly. She who had been so tactful and instructed a nurse, waiting on the leisure of nature, demanded the phenomenal for his sake.

Walled In

She thought of those whose creed holds to the cure of the sick by faith and who treat them with the therapeutics of prayer, and wondered if the world will ever teach its student souls how to deal with the great remedy of love. Could love, as the sacred words put it, "do all things?" Was it deficiency of the love power that caused the half of human ills? Or failed to cure the other half? If we loved as he of Bethany was loved—what might we do? What might we not? Would the graves starve?

In April, before the anniversary which both dreaded, but of which neither spoke, she went to the limits of her courage and took him away. Honoria had never reinforced the idle, conventional medical advice, which turns off anywhere and anyhow the patient whom it cannot cure. She did not chatter about change and travel, nor send to hotels or sanitariums a man who had lost the natural relations of health to the world of sound.

"There is nothing for it but your own house," she said.

She took a little furnished cottage on the north shore of Massachusetts and moved him there—with Philos. In the stimulating peace which descends upon the shore before the summer madness, they hid themselves and hoped. There, love and the sea wrought their will upon him, and unexpectedly, as a search-light flashes from a ship, he began to mend.

Short walks and long drives busied the happy

Malled In

days, and at night he slept like a working-man. Between lovelight and healthlight the radiance in his eyes was sometimes so intense that it blinded Honoria. She who had ministered to so much suffering, and he who had borne so much, were as incredulous of joy as an earth-sick soul is of heaven, marvelling if it can lie in the nature of blessedness to be permanent.

Into this paradise came one day the president of Routledge. Ferris had been for a ride across the long beach, and coming in had gone up-stairs to rest. Although he heard voices in the cottage parlor he did not concern himself until Honoria came up and told him who was there.

"He has come on an important errand," she said. In her manner he perceived a grave, controlled excitement. She did not follow him down-stairs, but left the two men alone together. Hildreth assumed at once his perfectly adjusted attitude, covering all embarrassment, eliding every pause. The cold spring tide was coming in, and they sat in the warm house and watched it while they talked.

"It is amazing," suggested Hildreth, going to the window, "the comfort of these furnace-heated ocean cottages. They are one of the most interesting luxuries of our luxurious day. One could live here all winter."

He stood for a few moments with his back to his host and his face towards the sea. Ferris knew that he was now about to find out what his friend had come for.

Walled In

Hildreth turned abruptly. "You are better."

"It is said to be hard to make a sick man say so, but indeed I am. You can see it for yourself, can't you?"

"I don't know whether it is miracle or magic, but I see a marvel. Mrs. Ferris tells me that you will recover."

"Even that has begun to seem possible," admitted Ferris. "We rode by the golf-links to-day; I really think if I had a brassie I could have made a drive—not that she would let me. I am under pretty strict orders."

"Ferris," said Hildreth, "I have accepted an appointment, after all. The President has done me the honor to send me to Austria. I go in September. I shall resign from Routledge in commencement week."

He paced up and down the cottage parlor; his profile cut between Ferris and the sea. His face was the face of a man to whom change, distraction, travel, diplomacy, must become the substitutes for home. He waved aside the words in which Ferris struggled to reply; he did so with the manner of one who would strike out all superfluities from a vital interview.

"Did you see that Gamaliel L. Strong was dead?" he asked, with an irrelevance which Ferris did not follow.

"Oh yes, I saw it. If I had been well I would have travelled any distance to his funeral. I think the man was so misguided as to love me.

Walled In

He was the only trustee who did. If I remember, I used to tell you that trustees couldn't. He was always good to me."

"He is good to you still," suggested Hildreth, with a light, bright smile. "He has left a will which concerns you."

"Concerns *me*?"

"He endows the presidential office with an assistant, or whatever you may call it; anything necessary to relieve one of the usual drudgery of the position. He only stipulates that this understudy shall be a Routledge graduate. This is done on the condition that when I resign you take my place."

"I don't understand you!" cried Ferris, turning sensitively pale.

"The trustees will act on the matter in June. I have sounded them thoroughly, and am authorized informally to test your wishes in this matter. When I go to Austria, will you accept the presidency of Routledge College?"

Ferris felt as if his brain were playing him a trick. He caught himself back just in time from saying, "Why, I have rented my house for two years!"

He got up and went to the fireplace and kicked the logs. When he had conquered his emotion he wheeled.

"Who is going on collecting tours? Who is going to do the banquets? The speeches? All the footlight business? Even at the most, the best that could be possible, I could never hold out for

Walled In

that sort of thing. I should have to be perfectly free to do what I can, to stop where I must. I should have to work below the surface, not on it. There is not a corporation in this land that would accept a president such as I should have to be. It's impossible!"

"There is not a college that would not be better off with such a president as you can be," replied his friend, with warm conviction. "Why not a new departure in these old schools as well as everywhere else? That seems to have been Strong's idea. In fact, I have not told you; there is an endowment besides. He has put the treasury upon a basis where it cannot afford not to give you full swing."

"This is too histrionic to be credible," interrupted Ferris, battling with his rising emotion.

"On the contrary," replied the college president, "such things are too common to be dramatic. You know as well as I do how often personal considerations are attached to university endowments. I had some talk with Mr. Strong the last week of his life. He explained to me pretty well what he meant. He wished some radical changes in the traditions of the executive office—less begging for funds, and more personal relation with the undergraduates. He wished to get down to the boys' hearts. He wished you to be a creation among college officers. I think he had in mind a sort of paternalism in college government. He said the boys loved you. He spoke of your misfortune,

Walled In

your suffering, your fortitude. He said that you could teach them things the rest of us could not."

"It seems to me that you describe a college pastor," said Ferris, with a trembling smile.

"Call it what you please. I never saw a pastor who could do precisely what Strong expected of you."

"Properly undertaken, it might be a valuable educational experiment," cried Ferris, eagerly.

"You would not have to waste yourself, you see," suggested Hildreth; "the way most of us do—filling public rôles, and putting small lead into display type. Some of the faculty could represent you at these purgatorial banquets—"

"And yet," interrupted Ferris, "you are going into a world of banquets. I shouldn't suppose court dinners would be a marked improvement."

"Did I say they were?" asked Hildreth.

"But I cannot see," continued the professor, absently, "how all this has come about—why I should have been selected, tied there in my study, shut away from the attrition of affairs, the values of action, as I must be, to receive such an honor from my college."

"You forget," observed Hildreth, "that you honor your college. The success of your books is a matter of consequence to Routledge. You do not understand that we are proud of you. Most of us try our hand sometimes at that sort of venture. I can't think of an important man of us in New England—now living, I mean—who has gone

Walled In

beyond the academic public as far as you have. *You* have reached the omnipotent people. Action and attrition are all well enough; any of us can talk and act. Thought and solitude—and suffering, Ferris—these, when all is said, remain the great motive powers of the world. Again, you forget how they have equipped you.”

“I suppose I could make the venture,” replied Ferris, in a low voice. “If I failed I should be the first to know it.”

“As you say, it is an experiment, but I hope you will try it, Ferris. I have thought of it a great deal. I believe I have thought it through. I believe in it. And you know I believe in you.”

“Hildreth—” began Ferris, but he choked. He who had never thought to do a man’s work again could not trust himself to any words; they were too frail a bridge.

“What a heavy tide!” said Hildreth, going to the window. “The ocean seems to want something. Does he often call like that?”

“He is calling for you,” said Ferris, sadly. “Pretty soon it will be between us, President Hildreth.”

The two men clasped hands silently. Both felt what neither said, that there was that between them deeper and wider than the sea. Yet both remembered that each had answered to the emergency when the other called—as men do in such cases, without any fuss about it and without many words. A friendship which has achieved as much

Walled In

as this for any two souls will not, though it appear to, pass out of the substance into the shadows of things.

Ferris retained the sea-shore cottage for the summer, and there he waxed in strength and lived a salt life. Jane and the boy and the servants joined the two, who did not prolong their rapturous solitude. Jane meant some day to go back to her own house and pack missionary barrels for Tahiti. But she did not say so; there would be time enough for that when Myrton could spare her. Twice in her life Jane had been necessary to Myrton, and twice had she ceased to be. Jane did not complain.

In the vigor of his recovered life, the professor came to think with impatience or distaste of his Routledge house, where he had suffered so much that even the glamour of his bridal weeks could not release him from its bonds. In fact, he only returned to it to move out of it.

One day, when they were packing books and sorting papers in his study, Honoria chanced upon the radiometer, disused and dusty, forgotten on a shelf. It was a brilliant day, and she set it in the September sun.

"It whirls as conscientiously as an electric fan," he observed.

"It has no more conscience than a dancing girl," she contended.

"Dear old Brander!" said Ferris. "I hope it won't bore him to play secretary. For a year, at least, it won't harm him."

Walled In

"I thought you said he couldn't spell."

The professor laughed. "Any stenographer can spell. Why should it be expected of a college graduate? Brander has spent his vacation in a business school."

The fitting went like a picnic. Honoria shielded him merrily from every annoyance or petty care, as a woman delights to shield her scholar when she loves him; and he moved from his hospitalized house into the president's cheerful mansion as if he had slipped into another room. For a few nights he was disturbed by the crying of the river, as she had foreseen. But this did not last.

When the term opened he called his students together and explained to them, in a measure, his purposes in their behalf. Even from the first he assumed with them what might be termed the confidential footing.

Already one hears him called by the name so dear to educators—the Arnold of America. The traditions of his personal story had come down from class to class during his long retirement, and he was surprised and touched to find himself at the very outset a hero to his college.

The relation that should exist and sometimes does, but more often misses between a father and his sons has been cultivated at Routledge between the president and the undergraduates to an extent which has been an object of respect and atten-

Walled In

tion in colleges less fortunate. It has been noticed that the new president possesses in an unusual degree what we call divination of character, and it is to the education of character as well as to the accumulation of knowledge that he has set himself with the joyous energy of a man who knows better than most of us how to value both and proportion them. All sorts and conditions of students have passed beneath his firm but sensitive hand—the athletic, the studious, the stupid, the merry—but it is said that the boy who is sick or the boy who is tempted loves him most.

It was told of him with real feeling at an alumni dinner not long ago, "His heart is a hospital. His study is a confessional." The speaker was young Professor Yewserk, now filling the chair of English.

"And the new wife?" privately asked an alumnus from the West, who had not "kept up" with modern history.

"The Madonna of the college," replied Yewserk, quickly.

"Ah?" rejoined the Westerner. "They occur occasionally. We had one such at Phillips when I was a boy. She wore a water-lily for a bracelet. She kept a lot of fellows straight. She had been an army nurse."

A man's second love may be his deepest and his best, but his first remains his most romantic. To this day Ferris does not sit upon the piazza in the rear of the president's house—the one overlooking

Walled In

Routledge River. The boy plays there and the dog. Sometimes they wander to the banks and frolic in the water, as boys must, and dogs. But if they stay too long the ever-womanly that always sees and must protect, but does not nag, steals down across the vivid grass to say:

"Philos, run to master." Or, "Trip, Papa will be uneasy. You know why."

The boy and the dog run laughing and barking, but the spaniel leaps ahead. For father is a strong word; but master is a deity. And wife is the goddess of all the words.

Now, sometimes on a summer's evening, when the Glee Club is abroad, it pauses by the way before the president's house—the singing students knowing that he loves music, his college, and themselves. Once, it is remembered, a rollicking sophomore began in a careless tenor:

"Nelly was a lady—"

But Mrs. Ferris, in her white dress, glided down across the lawn, and with an almost imperceptible backward motion of her hand towards the river checked the lad. This may be why the impression has gone about that the president prefers cheerful songs, and when the boys have given him their best and gayest—with now and then their tenderest—and study hours frown, they stroll on laughing, but singing as they laugh, one might say, as they breathe.

Walled In

From far down the elm-arched street the college yell rings back:

“Routledge!
Routledge!
Hi-ho-rah!”

Then swelling, diminishing, thrilling, rises and falls the ancient chorus, born for the universities of Germany two hundred years ago—to-day as young as boyhood, as eternal as joy:

“Gaudeamus igitur!”

Ferris and Honoria stand between the Doric pillars and listen to the song—he with his blurring memories, she with her indomitable hope. For love is either hope or memory. If it fail of the alternative, it ceases to be. Joy is a royal guest, but love is a divine host, and pain is the servant that waits on both.

THE END



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